United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Disaster displacement under the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: implications for inclusive growth in Africa

Key highlights

- The number of internally displaced populations has continued to rise over the past two decades in sub-Saharan Africa, with the number of new disaster displacements jumping from 3.4 million in 2019 to 4.3 million people, to date.

- The main factors driving displacement in Africa are inequality, environmental degradation, climate change and the disproportionate impacts of disasters.

- A number of gender-based barriers and discrimination hinder migrants for them to enjoy the full human rights.

- Migrants and displaced populations provide important social and economic contributions to their countries of origin and destination, despite the myriad challenges that confront them.

- The shortage of disaggregated data, however, continues to hamper evidence-based policymaking and well-informed public discourse on migration and displacement in Africa.

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 73/195 of 19 December 2018. It is the first intergovernmental agreement prepared under the auspices of the United Nations that covers all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It is grounded in international human rights law and reaffirms States' commitment to respecting, protecting and fulfilling all human rights for all migrants. The Global Compact rests on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and upholds the principles of non-regression and non-discrimination.

The Global Compact sets out 23 objectives, reinforced by specific commitments, that are intended to address challenges and enhance opportunities that pertain to migration (see annex I). The commitments and actions of the Global Compact provide a useful guide for African States to meet their human rights obligations when designing migration governance measures that reduce the risks and vulnerabilities that migrants face at different stages of migration, and to create conducive conditions that empower all migrants to become active members of society. In general, it is aimed at guaranteeing the safety of life, the protection of people, the safeguarding of human rights, the sharing of rights and duties of the States and the reinforcement of migration flow governance. The Global Compact enables States to translate abstract commitments into practical, cooperative action on specific migration issues.

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The continued monitoring and review of the implementation of these objectives supports States' progress towards achieving the rights of persons displaced in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation.

Disaster displacement and the role of the Global Compact

The Global Compact refers extensively to the phenomena of migration, mobility and displacement (a list of terms used in the present paper is provided in annex II). Objectives 2 (a), (h), (j), (k) and (l) of the Global Compact commits governments and stakeholders to the development of measures to tackle the adverse and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin. Specifically, objective 2 (j) encourages States to "integrate displacement considerations into disaster preparedness strategies and promote cooperation with neighbouring countries to prepare for early warning, contingency planning, stockpiling, coordination mechanisms, evacuation planning, reception and assistance arrangements, and public information". Objective 2 (l) further encourages States to take into consideration "relevant recommendations from State-led consultative processes, such as the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change, and the Platform on Disaster Displacement". Lastly, objective 21 (b) stresses that "returning migrants are assisted in their reintegration process through effective partnerships, including to avoid their becoming displaced in the country of origin upon return."
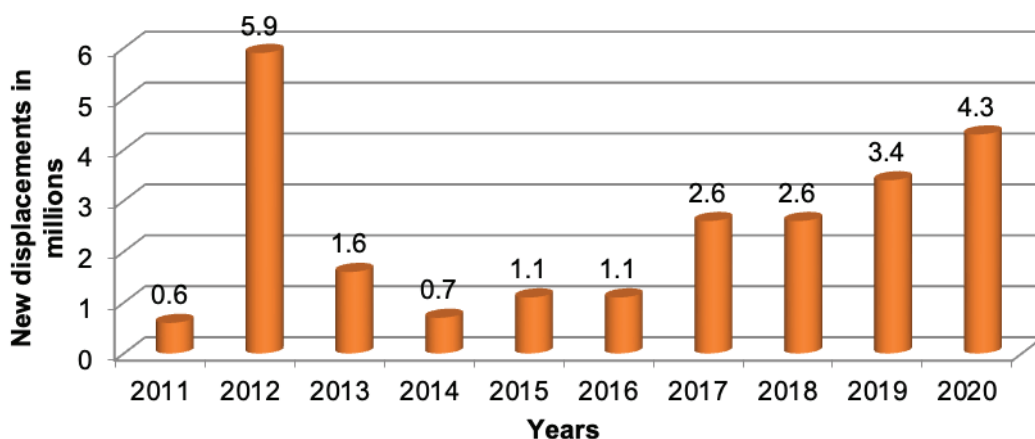
The aforementioned objectives emphasize the need for African countries to integrate displacement considerations into their disaster preparedness strategies and to prepare early warning systems, contingency planning, stockpiling and coordination mechanisms. In so doing, the movements associated with disasters would be more predictable and regular, thereby allowing governments and stakeholders to plan ahead to provide effective protection measures for people in all phases of their migration. This includes considering the vulnerabilitiesassociated with migration, in particular for women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, in order to design migration governance measures that enhance their resilience and adaptive capacity.

Under the Global Compact, countries are encouraged to strengthen joint analysis and sharing of risk information to better map, understand, predict and address migration movements, such as those that may result from sudden-onset and slow-onset disasters, thereby fostering coherence with the priorities and principles of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. In addition, countries are urged to consider the adverse effects of climate change, and the need to develop adaptation and resilience strategies, including across borders, that take into account the potential implications of migration.

Governments are encouraged to implement the Global Compact to ensure effective respect for and protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, across all stages of the migration cycle.

New disaster displacements for sub-Saharan Africa, 2011–2020

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Disaster displacement and its impact on the Sustainable Development Goals

The number of newly displaced persons as a result of disasters has continued to rise in Africa over the past decade (see the figure below). According to figures from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (see the 2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement), the number of new disaster displacements in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 3.4 million in 2019 to 4.3 million people to date, while displacements caused by violence and conflict rose to 6.8 million. The five countries with the highest number of displacements in Africa are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and South Sudan, with the majority of the displaced being young people between 5 and 14 years of age.

The major factors driving displacement are flooding, land degradation, locust invasion, the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and drought, which, along with other forces, compel people to move. This highlights the increasingly complex and interconnected drivers of mobility that require an inclusive, holistic and anticipatory approach to managing risks.

Disaster displacement has profound impacts on populations, especially on children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities. These include social and psychological impacts, the heightened need for protection, disruption to family life and exclusion from recovery and development initiatives. Migrant populations get left behind in development initiatives when they lack choices, opportunities and capabilities to earn an adequate and consistent income and to derive an equitable benefit from development. According to the development analyst Robert Chambers, "social inferiority, physical weaknesses, seasonal deprivation, vulnerability, powerlessness and humiliation"[1] interact to form a complex web that keeps such disadvantaged populations as migrants trapped in poverty. Millions of people in Africa remain illiterate and the malnutrition and primary school dropout rates are rising. These indicators show an extremely disturbing trend among displaced populations that requires urgent action to ensure that they are not left behind. Such action will also assist States in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Resolving these concerns will require African Governments, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, to reduce the risks of displacement and, if it occurs, to ensure that all migrants fully participate in social and economic activities and enjoy their human rights. This is in line with the Global Compact, the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in Africa and national policy frameworks that are intended to reduce vulnerabilities for migrants. This is further reinforced by target 7 of Goal 10 of the 2030 Agenda – facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies – which lays a firm foundation for the measures to be taken to reduce the risk to migrants and strengthen their resilience.

Examining the drivers of migration in a systematic and comprehensive manner is critical to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 10, which makes a strong call to "leave no one behind". Target 7 of Goal 10 shows the Agenda's strong focus on disadvantaged and marginalized population groups, who often are ignored; and it represents a paradigm and revolutionary shift in the development approach.

Reducing the risk of disaster displacement

Disaster risk reduction is central to enhancing the resilience and adaptation of migrants and further contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by ensuring that "no one is left behind". Objectives 2 and 5 of the Global Compact and target 7 of Sustainable Development Goal 10 lay a firm foundation for the measures to reduce the risk of migrants and strengthen their resilience. Objective 2 of the Global Compact refers to the need for risk reduction and presents the following actions: enhance data on migration linked with disasters (paragraph 18 (h)); develop adaptation, disaster risk reduction and resilience measures that take account of migration (paragraph 18 (i)); integrate displacement measures into preparedness strategies and promote transboundary cooperation (paragraph 18 (j)); and establish regional and subregional mechanisms linked to humanitarian assistance that is connected to disasters and strengthen collaboration between humanitarian and development partners to better address disaster-induced movements (paragraph 18 (k)).

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1 Robert Chambers, "Poverty and livelihoods: whose reality counts?", Discussion Paper, 347 (Brighton, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1994).

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Similarly, examining the causes of displacement, such as climate change, extreme weather and climate events and environmental degradation (see annex III), is key to reducing the risk of displacement in Africa. Migration and displacement as a result of climate change (rise in sea level, desertification, increase in temperatures, loss of biodiversity and land and forest degradation) are projected to rise.

Over the past two decades, the African Union has continued to demonstrate strong commitment to the implementation of the disaster risk reduction agenda on the continent. Recent commitments include: the Yaoundé Declaration on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa (2015); the Tunis Declaration on accelerating the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2018); and, recently, the Nairobi Declaration on accelerating the path to achieving the goals and targets of the Programme of

Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in Africa (2021). A revised matrix of the Programme of Action to guide the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and an institutional framework for the implementation of the multi-hazard early warning system in Africa were adopted by the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, at its session in Nairobi in 2021.

Implementing the disaster risk reduction strategies in Africa is also shaping the perception of displacement in the context of disasters. The Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in Africa, designed by the African Union Commission, is a good example: the Programme of Action, together with regional frameworks for free movement of persons, can contribute towards the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, by providing a robust basis for protecting people displaced internally or across borders by disasters

Tools and approaches for modelling disaster risk

Probabilistic risk profiles: The most commonly used assessment tool of the displacement risk community is the probabilistic forecast, as used by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Norwegian Refugee Council. It is exemplified in the models of the 2015 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction,a and has been updated through the CLIMADA Framework, which provides an open source and probabilistic risk modelling platform (see the 2019 Global; Report on Internal Displacement).

Big data approaches: Big data approaches use artificial intelligence or machine learning approaches to best predict displacement outcomes. An aggregated database that incorporates indicators of vulnerability and drivers of displacement is developed using sensors, digital devices, log files, the Internet and social media that locate and track online real-time data sources to process, analyse and predict disaster displacement. The software uses the training data to iteratively teach itself about what best predicts displacement over space and time.

System dynamic models: System dynamic models are used to explore the drivers of displacement in a deeply contextual way. Disaster settings – the circumstance that make disasters happen and exacerbate crises – are inherently dynamic and chaotic, and these models are designed to explore the reality of non-linear relationships in complex systems. Analysts use system dynamics models to investigate the ever-changing interconnectivity of indicators that explain displacement, as they differ across contexts and time, and how the causes of displacement are influenced by other preliminary mediating factors.

Agent-based models: Complementing the system dynamics approach, agent-based models are less widely applied in policy decision-making, but are often included in the development of indicators that substantiate causal pathways in displacement risk assessments. Agent-based models offer a unique micro-level insight around the decisions people make on the ground when experiencing natural- and human-induced hazards, often based on people's desires and characteristics.[1] Such models can imitate or simulate the decision-making of individuals, families and government officials, their perceptions and circumstances when experiencing natural and human-induced stress.

a Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 (Geneva, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

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[1] See Guillaume Arnoux Hébert, Liliana Perez and Saeed Harati, "An agent-based model to identify migration pathways of refugees: the case of Syria", in Liliana Perez, Eun-Kyeong Kim and Raja Sengupta, Agent-Based Models and Complexity Science in the Age of Geospatial Big Data, Springer International Publishing, 2018.,

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and climate change. These frameworks impose obligations on African States to prevent displacement, protect those displaced and promote conditions for safe return and reintegration, along with other lasting solutions.

Such targeted human rights-based and gender-responsive policy measures can be designed and implemented to help those who may need to move (internally or across borders) from unavoidable stressors, including disaster and climate risks, by creating conducive environments for planned and orderly migration into areas of low risk and high opportunity.

The limited availability of data disaggregated by gender, sex, socioeconomic status and other characteristics continues to hamper accurate mapping, analysis, understanding and prediction of risk of displacement Africa. To better understand the risk of displacement requires investment in data and a disaster information management system to collect, analyse, archive and predict the risk of displacement.

Predicting disaster displacement and migration

At present, there are a number of tools, approaches and methodologies used to support research to model and predict disaster displacement. Probabilistic risk assessment is commonly used by the CIMA Research Foundation and the International Organization for Migration, among others, to estimate the risk of migration and displacement (see box below).

Data source

Probabilistic models, big data approaches, system dynamic models, agent-based models and risk indices are the major techniques that are increasingly used by various organizations to predict risks associated with displacement in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. They rely on data from various sources to analyse displacement risks. Many countries and organizations are collecting, analysing and providing data on trends and damages on losses caused by disasters. They do, however, encounter such challenges as missing data, lack of disaggregated data and underreporting, due to limited infrastructural and technical capacities at the national and local levels, which hamper effective reporting and monitoring and prediction of displacement risks in Africa.

The major sources of data are:

a) . **Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre – Global Internal Displacement data**: This database provides comprehensive information on disaster displacement worldwide associated with conflict since 2003 and for disasters since 2008;

b) . **DesInventar:** This is an open database hosted by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction that contains disaster-loss data from more than 100 countries, for the purposes of disaster risk management and for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;

c) . **International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) system**: This system gathers and analyses data to disseminate critical multilayered information on the mobility, vulnerabilities and needs of displaced and mobile populations. The information enables decision makers and responders to better assist these populations with context specific assistance;

d) . **EM-DAT International Disaster Database**: This is an open database maintained by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters since 1988. It contains more than 22,000 disaster records worldwide from 1900 and approximately 300 events are recorded annually;

e) . **NatCatSERVICE (Munich Re):** This is another global database on disasters, founded in 1974 in Germany, that provides comprehensive and reliable information on the economic and human impacts of natural hazards. Regional and country level information is consolidated to allow for regional analysis;

f) . **SIGMA (Swiss Re):** This is a database on damage and losses from disasters established by the Swiss Reinsurance Company in 1968. It provides such information as risk data, date and place of the disaster and information on the victims, with approximately 300–350 events added to the database annually. The main objective of the database is to provide information for humanitarian action, disaster preparedness and guide vulnerability assessment. This database is compiled from various sources, including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, insurance companies, research institutes and press agencies.

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Conclusions and recommendations

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is a comprehensive framework that also addresses the reduction of environmental drivers of migration through the implementation of integrated and inclusive measures that prevent and reduce the impact of hazard exposure and vulnerability to disasters. It emphasizes the need to integrate displacement considerations into disaster preparedness strategies and to promote and prepare early warning systems, contingency planning, stockpiling and coordination mechanisms, which would enhance the resilience and adaptive capacity of migrants. Furthermore, the Global Compact encourages African States to reduce the risks to, and vulnerabilities of migrants in line with Sustainable Development Goal 10 target 7, which underscores the need to examine the drivers of migration in a systematic and comprehensive manner. This framework should be complemented with others such as the Sendai Framework, to strengthen understanding of the risk of displacement and strengthen preparedness and multi-hazard early warning systems in the context of displacement.

Examining the environmental drivers of displacement is an essential element in the reduction of displacement risks. It is critical for neighbouring countries which become host to the displaced communities to consider the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change and to adopt various tools, approaches and methodologies that will support research and model and predict disaster displacement.

In the light of the above, the following recommendations are presented to decision makers.

1. **Support the collection of comprehensive data to better understand the nature of displacement risk as a basis for building the resilience of migrants and displaced populations**

To strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations, decision makers need to understand the nature of exposure and vulnerability to displacement and the impact that disaster and climate change has on people. This requires countries to collect, analyse and archive reliable and accurate data in a usable format disaggregated by sex, gender, age, disability, migration status and other characteristics, such as how many people are exposed to or are at risk of displacement, how many are displaced, to where and for how long, all of which are useful data to guide policy and decision-making. At present, very few countries are recording these data because of technical and infrastructural challenges. The limited spatial and temporal coverage of data pose challenges in using the information to predict risk of displacement at the regional level. More needs to be done by African Governments, with support from stakeholders, to ensure that migrants and displaced persons are part of the national development agenda and to revamp the national statistical system to take due account of data on migrants.

2. **Take account of changes in demographic, climate change and development changes in the models to better predict displacement**

Migration and disaster displacement are expected to continue rising in Africa as a result of population growth, increased exposure from extreme weather and climate events and land degradation. Climate change is projected to escalate the frequency and intensity of these extreme climate events, which could bring about more migration and displacement on the continent. Accordingly, changes in demography, inclusive growth, climate change and the heightened frequency of these extreme events should be considered when projecting future displacement and migration risks. The current models that are used to predict the risk of displacement should take account of these changes at the grid level, including the extent of future economic growth, a key driver of migration. The amount of data required to run the models is, however, significant and more effort and resources are needed to address the current data gaps at the country and regional levels.

3. **Adopt gender-responsive preparedness measures and policies to enhance orderly migration and boost economic growth**

Preparedness measures and effective people-centred early warning systems are important instruments in facilitating orderly migration that avoids disruptive mass displacements from a sudden-onset disasters such as flooding. Cross-border migrants and even internally displaced persons should be supported in their efforts to acquire decent work and to maximize their contribution to the socioeconomic growth of the countries in which they have settled and their communities of origin; and be protected from all forms of exploitation and discrimination (see Global Compact objectives 6, 7, 16, 18, 20 and 22, provided in annex I). Even though migrant women are

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often paid less than men, they remit a higher proportion of their earnings for use in health care and education in their countries of origin.[2]

Annex I

Objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

1. Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.

2. Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin.

3. Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration.

4. Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation.

5. Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.

6. Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work.

7. Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration.

8. Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants.

9. Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants.

10. Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.

11. Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner.

12. Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral.

13. Use immigration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives.

14. Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle.

15. Provide access to basic services for migrants.

16. Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion.

17. Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration.

18. Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences.

19. Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries.

20. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants.

21. Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration.

22. Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits.

23. Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Annex II

Terminology[1]

Affected population

This term refers to people who are affected, either directly or indirectly, by a hazardous event. Directly affected populations are those who have suffered injury, illness or other health effects; who were evacuated, displaced, relocated or have suffered direct damage to their livelihoods, economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets. Indirectly affected populations are people who have suffered consequences, other than or in addition to direct effects, over time, due to disruption or

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2 Human Rights Council, "The impact of migration on migrant women and girls: a gendered perspective". Report on Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants (2019) A/HRC/41/38).

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changes in economy, critical infrastructure, basic services, commerce or work, or social, health and psychological consequences.

Disaster displacement

"Disaster displacement" refers to situations in which people are forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence because of a disaster or to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard. Such displacement results from a situation in which the affected persons being exposed to a natural hazard are too vulnerable and lack the resilience to withstand the impacts of that hazard.

Migration

The term "migration" is used to describe movement that is predominantly voluntary. Movements that people make in an attempt to build their resilience and ability to adapt to slow-onset hazards and environmental change are referred to as "migration as adaptation".

1 Adapted from United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Disaster Displacement: How to Reduce Risk, Address Impacts and Address Resilience, Words into Action Guidelines, Geneva, 2019.

Annex III

Ways in which climate change triggers migration and displacement

Sea level rise

The seas have risen by 20 cm since the start of the twentieth century, due to the expansion of seas and glacial melting displacing thousands of people.

Desertification

Nearly six hundred and thirty million people are affected by the irreversible trend of desertification of the dry lands globally and the trend is worsening because of global warming.

Increase in temperatures

On average, global temperatures have risen by 0.18°C since 1981, affecting water, soil moisture, human health, food security, marine life and the ecosystem.

Land and forest degradation

Expansion and unsustainable management of land and pasture lands and exacerbated by climate change are causing land degradation.

Loss of biodiversity

Increasing temperatures and altered precipitation patterns are affecting the structure, composition and functions of ecosystems, causing biodiversity loss and reductions in the ecosystem services that support human wellbeing, which may affect migration.