



**THE
NANSEN
INITIATIVE**

DISASTER-INDUCED CROSS-BORDER DISPLACEMENT



**ATENEO DE MANILA
UNIVERSITY**

Summary of Conclusions Nansen Initiative Southeast Asian Regional Consultation

Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change in Southeast Asia

Manila, Philippines, 15-17 October 2014

More than 100 participants representing governments of nine countries from Southeast Asia, including Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam, as well as representatives from Australia, Germany, Haiti, Japan, the Nansen Initiative and its Chairmanship, and representatives from regional and international organizations, UN Agencies, civil society and research institutions, met in Manila, Philippines from 15-17 October 2014 for the fourth Nansen Initiative Regional Consultation under the theme “Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change in Southeast Asia.” The participants expressed their appreciation to the Government of the Philippines for hosting and the Chairmanship of the Nansen Initiative for supporting this important consultation.

The participants welcomed the Nansen Initiative, which is a state-led,¹ bottom-up consultative process intended to contribute towards the development of a protection agenda addressing the needs of people displaced across borders in the context of sudden and slow-onset disasters and the effects of climate change. The overall objectives of the Nansen Initiative Southeast Asian Regional Consultation were to identify specific challenges and opportunities that the region faces related to disasters, climate change, and human mobility² and to develop practical, policy and programmatic recommendations on how to address these challenges at national, regional and international levels. These Conclusions will be submitted to the Nansen Initiative Global Consultation that will take place in Geneva in October 2015, and within relevant regional and international fora.

Participants recognized that Southeast Asia is one of the world’s most vulnerable regions to natural hazards, including typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis, storm surges, volcanos, floods, droughts, forest fires, and landslides. They acknowledged that given the region’s high exposure, Southeast Asia is also increasingly facing the negative impact of climate change through rising sea levels, ocean acidification, increasing salinity, coastal erosion, land degradation, and the increased frequency and intensity of hydro-metrological disasters that threaten human settlements, infrastructure, natural resources and associated livelihoods.

¹ The Nansen Initiative Steering Group includes Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Germany, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, and Switzerland.

² In this document, human mobility includes displacement, migration and planned relocation or resettlement. The term “displacement” refers to situations where people are forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence. The term “migration” is used to refer to movements that are *predominantly* voluntary. “Planned relocation,” in some countries called “resettlement,” refers to an organized movement, normally of a community, which can be voluntary or involuntary.

Participants acknowledged that Southeast Asia is one of the regions most affected by displacement in the context of sudden-onset disasters, with approximately 7.14 million people forced to flee and leave their homes in 2013 alone.³ They recalled the devastating experience of the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda, which displaced 918,261 families in the Philippines,⁴ posing continuing challenges for finding durable solutions, and the 7.2 Bohol earthquake that struck the Philippines exactly one year ago on 15 October 2013, displacing some 365,000 people. Other examples presented include the 2010 eruption of Indonesia's Mount Merapi volcano, which forced the evacuation of 365,000 people from their homes, the super Typhoon Ketsana that hit Cambodia in 2009 forcing the evacuation of close to 6,000 households, and the 2008 Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar that displaced approximately 800,000 people. Finally participants highlighted the unprecedented 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami that displaced over 500,000 people in Indonesia alone.

Participants highlighted existing and envisaged legal frameworks relevant to the protection of internally displaced persons in disaster contexts, citing regional and national legal frameworks to protect fundamental rights, to address disaster management and climate change adaptation, as well as international human rights standards such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. However, participants expressed concern that the impacts of climate change combined with rapidly growing, densely populated urban areas, and pre-existing vulnerabilities linked to social inequalities and poverty are likely to increase displacement and migration in the future, including across international borders. They noted that while cross-border displacement is rare in Southeast Asia, inadequate national responses to internal displacement and weak recovery efforts may trigger secondary movements across borders.

Participants noted the magnitude of migration in Southeast Asia with some of the states belonging to the biggest countries of origin world-wide and others being among the most important destinations for migrants.⁵ They acknowledged that natural hazards such as recurring floods, sea-level rise and droughts have huge negative impacts on livelihoods, health and human life, and thereby are increasingly becoming factors influencing decisions of individuals and families to migrate abroad. Participants further acknowledged the presence of larger Southeast Asian migrant communities in other regions, and the need to provide for their protection accordingly. However, participants stated that managed properly, migration could be a positive climate change adaptation measure that could help to create livelihood opportunities and support economic development, and thus reduce future displacement.

Participants recognized that natural hazards have led many governments in the region to relocate communities to safer areas, recalling the relocation of populations affected by the extensive annual flooding in the Mekong Delta, and planned relocation processes in other parts of Southeast Asia after sudden-onset disasters when areas are deemed unsafe for continued habitation. While identifying the potential to increase vulnerable communities' resilience and security, participants acknowledged the challenges of ensuring adequate livelihood opportunities and social support in relocation processes, emphasizing the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches that include consulting and engaging communities especially at the local level in the planning and implementation process, as well as the need for transparency and financial accountability.

Participants identified the central role of existing national disaster risk reduction plans and strategies, climate change adaptation strategies, and development plans to mitigate and reduce displacement, as well as regional and international processes, such as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative, and the Hyogo Framework for Action.

³ IDMC, *Global Estimates 2014: People displaced by disasters* (Geneva 2014).

⁴ National Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Council (NDRRMC), Government of the Philippines.

⁵ Graeme Hugo, "The Future of Migration Policies in the Asia-Pacific Region," IOM (2010).

Participants expressed concern about the protection challenges facing displaced persons in disaster contexts, identifying challenges such as lost or destroyed documentation, separated families, physical security concerns in crowded evacuation centers, the exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities, the need for psychosocial support, and protracted displacement pending finding a durable solution. They mentioned the heightened risk for women and children in particular to fall victim to human trafficking and smuggling after disasters. Participants also noted that there is no legal mechanism within Southeast Asia that assures the admission of people potentially displaced across international borders in the context of disasters, and highlighted the lack of international guidelines on the obligations of States when environmentally displaced persons cross international borders.

Participants emphasized the need for recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction processes to begin as soon as possible after a disaster, noting the importance of ensuring community consultation at all stages of the process. They recognized the challenges of building back better, both safer and faster, to strengthen the resilience of disaster prone communities in the face of future disasters, and to restart and provide support for the development of diversified livelihood opportunities as quickly as possible to support self-reliance.

Participants expressed concern about the specific protection concerns that arise for migrants residing in or transiting through a country when a disaster strikes, such as accessing humanitarian assistance, receiving consular services, negotiating a release from employment, facilitating departure and safe passage even in an irregular situation, and support for repatriation, noting in particular the risks for undocumented migrants. They identified existing relevant mechanisms and frameworks to respond to such migrants abroad, including national government offices to support migrants abroad, bilateral agreements, the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (Cebu Declaration), the Regional Consultative Process on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labor for Countries of Origin in Asia (Colombo Process) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Participants recognized that comprehensive data collection and analysis is needed to inform relevant national and regional laws and policies on displacement, migration and planned relocation in the context of disasters and climate change in Southeast Asia.

Participants acknowledged that prevention, preparedness, and responses to human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change require action to be taken at community, national, regional and international levels. They identified six areas where action is needed:

I. Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation

1. Develop and institutionalize community-based and traditional disaster risk mapping tools and methodologies to identify populations most exposed to natural hazards and at a high risk of displacement, including groups particularly at risk such as children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities.
2. Integrate mapping of disaster-related displacement risks with climate change risk scenarios and projections to inform national and regional disaster preparedness and contingency planning, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, planned relocation plans, and development plans.
3. Establish early warning information systems, clearly describing the hazard, the populations most at risk of displacement, and evacuation corridors and sites. Distribute such information in ways that affected communities can easily understand.

4. Increase general awareness on the importance of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, enhance local capacity in this regard, and encourage local communities to make their own plans with the support of local and national authorities, civil society and the private sector.
5. Mainstream disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, including with regard to the prevention of displacement, the facilitation of migration as adaptation, and planned relocation processes, into national and local social, economic and development sectors and plans in order to strengthen resilience.
6. Build upon and strengthen the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI) with particular regard to human mobility.
7. Encourage governments in the region to develop common messaging on the inclusion of displacement and planned relocation issues within the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework.
8. Recognize the relevance of migration as a strategy for individuals and households to adapt to the challenges of climate change and slow- as well as sudden-onset disasters, and the need to train and prepare potential migrants so that they can participate in regional and global labour markets in safety and dignity.

II. Planned relocation

1. Prioritize policies and programs that build resilience to natural hazards and allow people to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. Consider planned relocation only in cases where such measures are insufficient to protect them.
2. Develop guidelines, building upon global guidelines such as those used by development banks, but adapted to the local context and supported by strong public policies at national and local levels, to make planned relocation effective and sustainable.
3. Increase general knowledge on and understanding of disaster risks and the opportunities for vulnerable communities created by planned relocation.
4. In the event that permanent relocation becomes necessary:
 - a. Implement such measures in full respect for the rights of affected people, including host communities, taking into account the potential of planned relocation to achieve development goals;
 - b. Engage communities in consultation, planning, implementation and evaluation of such measures, taking into account community ties, cultural values, traditions and psychological attachments to their original place of residence;
 - c. Ensure the provision of livelihoods, including safe and adequate access to productive land, markets and credit;
 - d. Ensure the provision of adequate housing and secure land tenure, infrastructure, public spaces, education, health and other relevant services;

- e. Ensure that relocation sites do not expose relocated people to disaster risks and provide for measures protecting them in the event of future disasters.

III. Internal Displacement in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change

1. Acknowledge that people displaced within their own countries, and in particular women and children, sick and wounded persons or persons with disabilities, may need not only humanitarian assistance but may also face specific protection risks linked to the type of the natural hazard and the involuntary nature of the movement.
2. Develop, at the national level, clear policy guidance to protect internally displaced people, and consider adopting national legislation on internal displacement.
3. Strengthen the institutional capacity of local and national authorities to enhance support for internally displaced persons.
4. During the emergency phase:
 - a. Provide for safe evacuation where possible;
 - b. Consult internally displaced people in humanitarian needs assessments;
 - c. Mobilize displaced communities to monitor respect for the rights of their members;
 - d. Consider using thematic clusters to implement the disaster response in a coordinated manner, drawing on the leadership of relevant government entities, and the respective strengths of humanitarian agencies, civil society and the private sector.
5. Ensure the smooth transition from the emergency to the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction phase allowing internally displaced persons to find durable solutions ending their displacement, in particular by
 - a. Considering the use of thematic clusters led by government entities to coordinate relevant development actors;
 - b. Consulting with internally displaced persons and mobilizing them to participate in rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction activities;
 - c. Working with and through local governments to ensure that the local context, traditions and cultural sensitivities are taken into account;
 - d. Emphasizing the reestablishment of livelihoods and basic services, as well as housing and infrastructure.

IV. Cross-Border Displacement in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change

1. Encourage the admission, on a temporary basis, of displaced persons in need of assistance and protection abroad when their lives or health are at risk, until return becomes possible;
2. Examine the possibility of developing temporary protection mechanisms at bilateral, sub-regional or regional levels.
3. Consider including cross-border displacement scenarios within AADMER contingency planning exercises.

V. Protecting Migrants Abroad in Disaster Contexts

1. Building upon the Cebu Declaration, ASEAN Member States should affirm the basic humanitarian principles for all migrant workers affected by disasters, regardless of their status, and develop bilateral or regional standard operating procedures for addressing the needs of migrants abroad in disaster contexts.
2. Sending countries of migrants affected by disasters in a receiving country should develop public policies on assisting and protecting such persons, and in particular the means to locate persons abroad, facilitating access to consular services, and providing support for safe return.
3. Receiving countries when affected by disasters should provide access to emergency assistance for migrants regardless of their status, allow for and facilitate voluntary departure, and ensure safe passage.
4. Receiving countries are encouraged to temporarily refrain from deporting migrants from countries seriously affected by disasters.
5. Consider the creation of an ASEAN migrant relief network at the regional level to help raise resources and finance relief efforts in disaster situations.
6. Countries are encouraged to ratify relevant international instruments or conventions to protect migrants such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

VI. Data Collection and Scientific Knowledge

1. Enhance data collection and scientific knowledge regarding the causes, dynamics, and effects of human mobility in the context of slow- and sudden-onset disasters and the adverse effects of climate change to improve disaster risk analysis, humanitarian response, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction plans, and development planning.
2. Develop a better understanding of the differential gender impacts of climate change and disasters.
3. Promote modelling and analysis of climate change and human mobility for individual countries.
4. Ensure systematic dissemination of data and knowledge with decision makers at local, national and regional levels, and encourage information exchange among countries.
5. Dedicate resources to mobilize local expertise and strengthen research capacities in the region, drawing upon regional and international support.

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