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NO ESCAPE

On the frontlines of Climate Change, Conflict and Forced Displacement

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Women from the Volontaires Réfugiés pour la Propreté du Camp (Refugee Volunteers Cleaning the Camp) group collect refuse and tend tree saplings at the Mbera refugee camp in the Hodh Ech Chargui region of south-eastern Mauritania. © UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

GRACE DORONG

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ROOT OF GENERATIONS

I spent much of my childhood at Kakuma Refugee Camp in northern Kenya, living in a place surrounded by barbed wire, in plastic shelters, with toilets that smelled, knowing that it was not home. Everything one has there is temporary – in fact, everything about one's whole life there feels temporary. One day, I reached crisis point: I wanted an education that would change my future, or I would just have to lie down and wait for the end. But I knew I was meant to live.

Getting that education became a test of willpower. I won a scholarship to train as a commercial pilot, but it was withdrawn because scholarships weren't meant for women – they were given, I was told, only to "men who will rebuild the country". I chose another subject and enrolled anyway. If I couldn't be one of the "men who will rebuild" South Sudan, then I could still restore hope in the hearts of many who were vulnerable, distressed and in pain. It was a financial struggle but I earned my bachelor's degree and then an MBA.

The platform I created to realize my dream is called Root of Generations – a women-led grassroots organization striving to create a world where women and girls are protected, cared for and able to realize their full potential. My organization is a symbol of hope, restoration and energy. We envision a society where women are not victims, but builders. We support them to access their rights – to education, health care, protection against violence, economic security.

And, not least, we give people in crisis a voice so that they can speak for themselves.

That is what is so fundamental to this report on climate change. It includes the voices of those with actual, lived experience both of forced displacement and of the effects of the climate crisis. They are speaking to let the world know how climate change is making their displacement so much more difficult.

In South Sudan, and around this region where so many people have been displaced for so many years, we see the effects of climate change before our very eyes. I hope the voices of the people in this report help decision-makers to understand that if not addressed, forced displacement – and the multiplying effect of climate change – will get worse. But if they listen to us, we can be part of the solution, too.

FILIPPO GRANDI

HIGH COMMISSIONER, UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Conflict, violence and persecution have uprooted tens of millions of people right across the planet. Forced to run for their lives, the forcibly displaced already face huge challenges as they attempt to find safety, recover and rebuild. Yet those challenges are growing ever more formidable and complex – for now this vulnerable population must also contend with the devastating effects of the global climate crisis.

Across our warming world, drought, floods, life-threatening heat and other extreme weather events are creating emergencies with alarming frequency. And people forced to flee their homes are on the front lines of this crisis: 75 per cent of them live in countries with high-to-extreme exposure to climate-related hazards. As the speed and scale of climate change increase, this figure will only continue to rise.

Already dealing with multiple threats and fears for the future, displaced people face being left even further behind. Billions of dollars are going into climate finance to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, but very little is going to countries facing its harshest impact, even though these are often the ones hosting the majority of forcibly displaced people.

As this report shows, extremely fragile states receive around $2 per person in annual adaptation funding – compared to $161 per person in non-fragile states. This is a massive difference, and a massive injustice. Without a major increase in accessible climate finance to better protect and support displaced people and those who host them, their hardships will worsen, their resilience will diminish and their needs will only grow.

What's more, as climate shocks hit harder, more often and in more places, displaced people are increasingly finding themselves forced to move again and again in search of somewhere safe and habitable – even as the number of such places dwindles.

Investing in climate justice is not only the right thing to do; it is also an investment in peace, security and stability. At the heart of this issue lies the fate of millions of people who contributed almost nothing to global carbon emissions, but are among those paying the highest price. Their plight demands urgent action – and we cannot leave them to solve this alone.

In this report, UNHCR sets out a roadmap for a multi-faceted response, based both on hard evidence and the voices of those who are being most affected. With prompt action, at a scale that this crisis demands, solutions are within reach. But time is running short.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The climate crisis is a human crisis. How you experience it depends on who you are and where you live. Millions of people across the globe continue to be forced to flee their homes because of violence, conflict, and climate-related hazards. In fact, the number of forcibly displaced people in the world today has never been higher – doubling to more than 120 million people over the past 10 years.

Whether short-lived or protracted, forced displacement brings unimaginable loss and suffering. While conflict remains the primary driver of displacement, climate change can aggravate an already devastating reality. Its impacts disproportionately affect the world's most vulnerable populations – including refugees, people displaced by conflict, and the communities hosting them. Often lacking critical resources such as stable housing, financial security, institutional support, or access to essential services, displaced people now also struggle to prepare for, adapt or recover from disasters like floods, droughts, and heatwaves.

The climate crisis is not happening in a vacuum. This report addresses the intersection between climate change, conflict and forced displacement. Although complex and multidimensional, these linkages are undeniably influencing the ways people experience forced displacement and whether they are forced to move again.

The plight of displaced populations, and the communities hosting them has often been underreported and their voices excluded and marginalized. This report analyses the current realities and reveals a story of immense scale: **90 million displaced people are living in countries with high-to-extreme exposure to climate-related hazards and nearly half out of all forcibly displaced people are bearing the burden of both conflict and the adverse effects of climate change.** These include countries like Sudan, Syria, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Somalia. (Craparo, et al., forthcoming).

Ethiopia. UNHCR supports the displaced and host communities in Melkadida
© UNHCR/Tiksa Negeri

The impacts of climate change are also exacerbating drivers of displacement, both within and beyond national borders. Over the past 10 years, weather-related disasters have caused 220 million internal displacements – **equivalent to approximately 60,000 displacements per day** (IDMC, 2024). In 2023, more than a quarter of these occurred in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This displacement can be either temporary or protracted, with people often trying to stay as close to their communities as possible, with the aim of returning to their land and homes at the first available opportunity.

As climate-related hazards increase in the coming decades, the risks for displaced people and their hosts will grow significantly. By 2040, the number of countries facing extreme climate-related hazards is expected to rise from three to 65, the vast majority of which are hosting displaced populations (Craparo, et al., forthcoming). Extreme heat will also rise significantly, with most refugee settlements and camps projected to experience twice as many days of dangerous heat by 2050 (Van Den Hoek et al., 2024).

As climate shocks and stresses impact the homelands and destinations of forcibly displaced people, they increasingly find themselves with no escape route. Climate change is increasing the challenges displaced people face in finding durable solutions, and thereby increasing the risk of protracted, recurrent, and onward displacement. By the end of 2023, over 70 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers came from highly climate-vulnerable countries that are also least ready to improve their resilience (ND-GAIN, 2022), jeopardizing their opportunities for return.

Colombia. Visit to floods in La Sierpe, municipality of Majagual in the department of Sucre.
© UNHCR/Catalina Betancur Sánchez

While the situation is dire, this report demonstrates sustainable solutions are within reach. Worst case scenarios can be avoided, through integrated approaches that are climate-smart, protection- and gender-centred, human rights-based, conflict-sensitive, and peace-responsive. The report therefore concludes with a strong call to action:

1

PROTECT

displaced people fleeing in the context of climate change impacts and disasters by applying and adapting existing legal tools.

2

INCLUDE

the voices and specific needs of displaced populations and host communities in climate finance and policy decisions.

INVEST

in building climate resilience where needs are greatest, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

3

ACCELERATE

the reduction of carbon emissions to prevent climate disaster and to avert and, minimize further displacement.

4

3 in 4

forcibly displaced people live in countries with high-to-extreme exposure to climate-related hazards.

Extremely fragile states receive just

$2.1

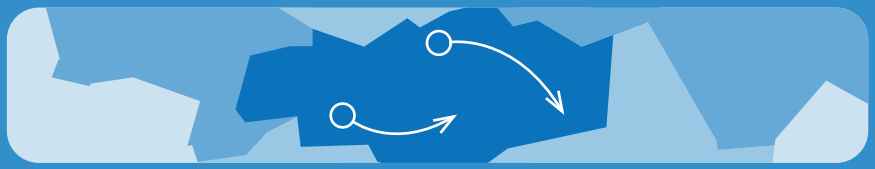
per person in annual per capita adaptation funding.

Most refugee settlements and camps are projected to experience

twice as many

days of dangerous heat by 2050.

Over the past 10 years, weather-related disasters have caused



220 million

internal displacements.

Equivalent to approximately

60,000

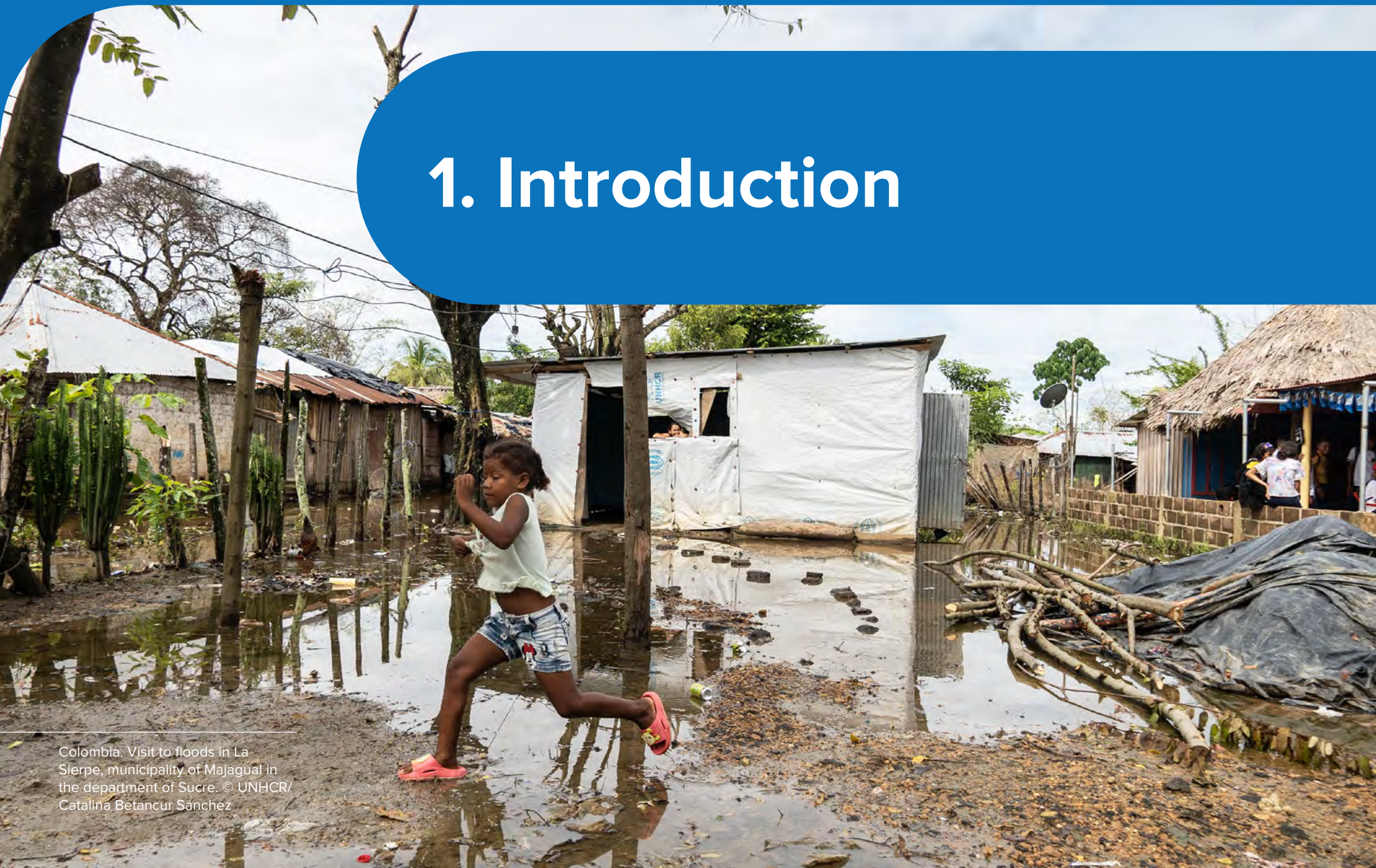
displacements per day.

Just **24 of 60** National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

and **25 of 166** Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

have included concrete provisions on displacement in the context of climate change and disasters.

1. Introduction



Colombia. Visit to floods in La Sierpe, municipality of Majagual in the department of Sucre. © UNHCR/ Catalina Betancur Sánchez

“That night was unforgettable as our house was inundated within minutes. We had no other option but to leave at once,” recalls Bahadur Khan, a 60-year-old Afghan refugee living in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, of the 2022 floods in the area. Bahadur and his family had endured the relentless monsoon rains that began in June, but they were unprepared for the Kabul River’s violent surge months later. In just 10 minutes, Bahadur was forced to grab what little he could and flee with his family to higher ground.

It was the third time in his life that Bahadur had been uprooted. The first time was by Afghanistan’s civil war in the early 1990s, and the second in 2010, when floods destroyed his home. Now, once more displaced by catastrophic flooding, Bahadur faced the daily struggle to find food and clean water while worrying about his children’s future, uncertain of how he would provide for them when there was nowhere safe to go.

Bahadur Khan surveys the flood damage, Kheshgi Refugee Village, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, September 2022 © UNHCR/Usman Ghani

The story of Bahadur illustrates the multilayered interactions between conflict, climate change and forced displacement. While each story is unique, his account reflects larger trends of prolonged displacement and entrenched violence that are being made worse by the adverse impacts of climate change.

To better understand these links, this report explores the relationships between conflict, climate change, and forced displacement. It is a relationship which is complex and multidimensional, depending on prevailing social, economic, and political conditions (see figure 1). The impacts of the climate crisis are intensifying the vulnerability of people already displaced by war, violence, or persecution, making their lives even more precarious. Climate-related shocks and stresses are also increasingly interacting with drivers of conflict and other causes of displacement (Weathering Risk, 2023).

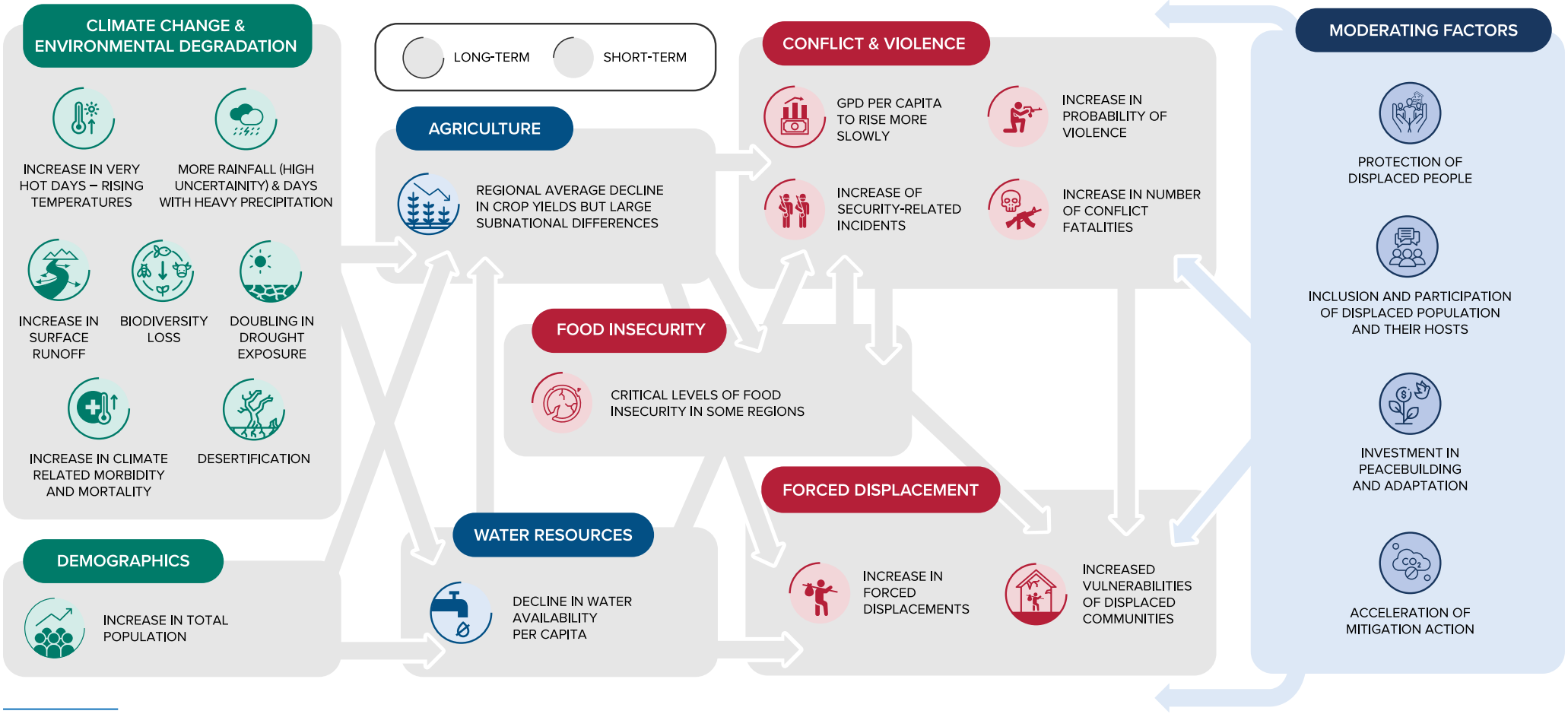
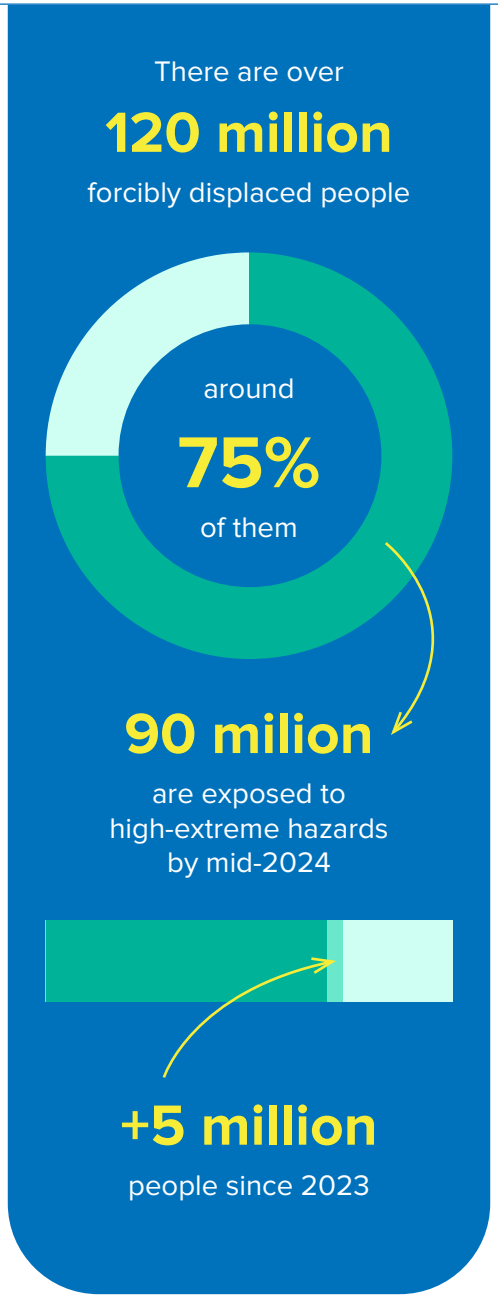


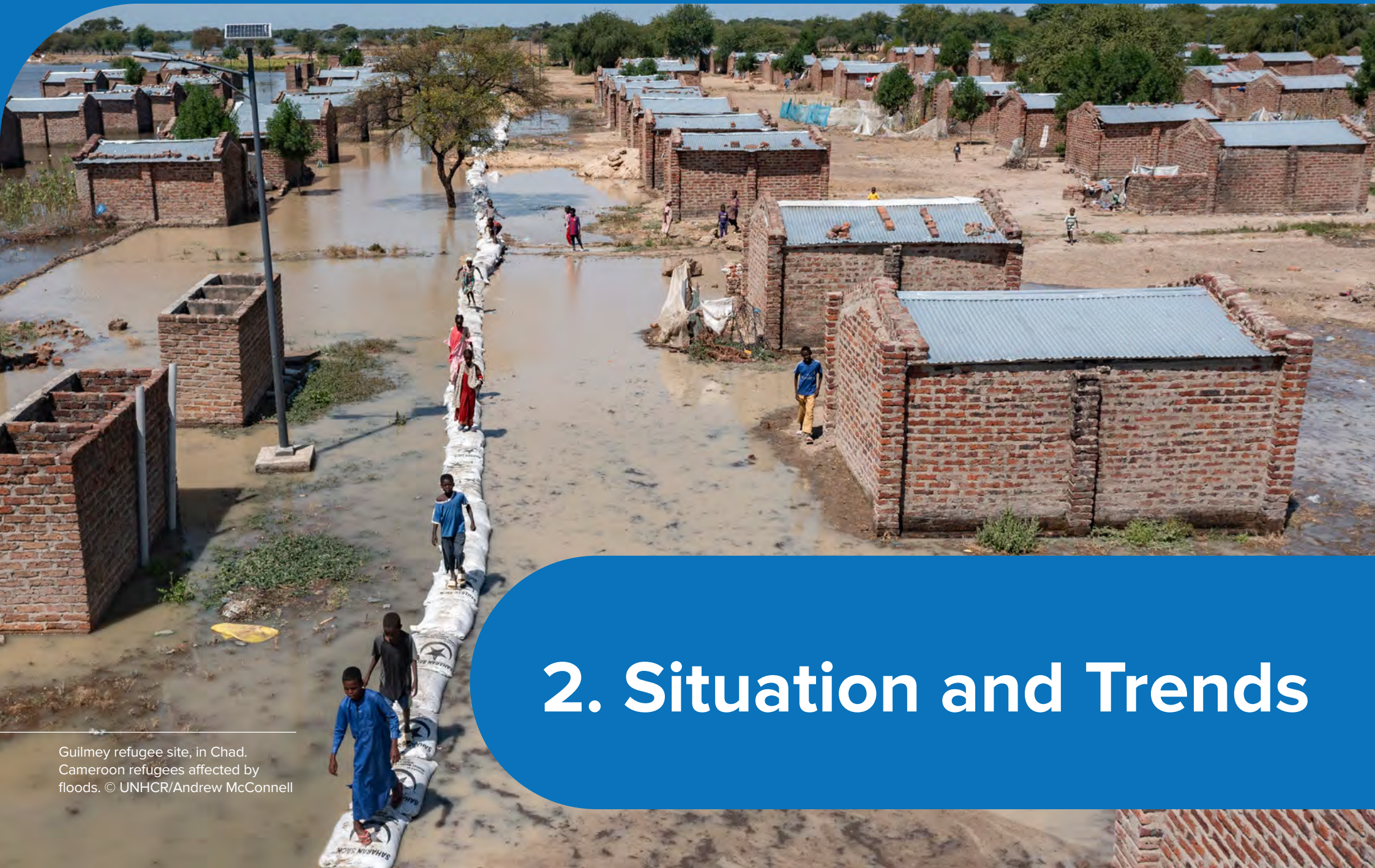
Figure 1: A representation of the links between conflict, climate change and forced displacement adapted from the "Moving from Reaction to Action - Anticipating Vulnerability Hotspots in the Sahel" report.

By mid-2024, around 90 million of the current 123 million forcibly displaced people are living in countries with high-to-extreme exposure to climate-related hazards (Craparo, et al., forthcoming). This represents an increase of around 5 million forcibly displaced people living in highly vulnerable areas just since the end of 2023. Bahadur Khan is one among millions of people with similar stories, who are struggling to survive extreme weather events that have become more frequent and destructive. Even if peace were to prevail, the increased risk of drought, punctuated by devastating storms, flooding, and deadly heat are complicating efforts by those displaced by conflict to return to their original communities. This is the case, not just in countries experiencing conflict, but also in environments made increasingly uninhabitable because of the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation (Craparo et al., forthcoming)

The report details how disasters and other adverse effects of climate change are exacerbating existing challenges faced by displaced people and their hosts, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. It outlines approaches that can help strengthen the resilience and inclusion of displaced people and their hosts and close the gaps in available resources by guiding financing decisions through a needs-based approach. The report concludes with recommendations for improving policies and prioritizing financing for climate action and refugee protection. These recommendations are supported with scientific evidence and concrete examples of climate action that illustrate both the challenges and potential for workable measures that could make a difference at scale for people on the frontlines.



This report is a result of collaboration spearheaded by UNHCR in partnership with researchers from across the world: Alp Analytica; Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT (Alliance); Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR); CGIAR Initiative on Fragility, Conflict and Migration; German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP); Green Climate Fund (GCF); Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC); IMPACT Initiatives; Montana State University; Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI); Oregon State University; YOUNGO and with the contributions of affected communities and Refugee-led Organizations: Community Aid Network and Dadaab Response Association.



2. Situation and Trends

Guilmey refugee site, in Chad. Cameroon refugees affected by floods. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

2.1. SITUATION

The number of forcibly displaced people in the world today has never been higher, in part due to the speed and scale of climate change. In addition to floods and cyclones, which can wreak havoc and displace entire communities in a matter of hours, slow-onset environmental changes such as sea-level rise, drought, desertification, and rising temperatures can force people to abandon their land, homes, and communities, as well as their traditional support networks and social safety nets.

As of June 2024, over 120 million people across the world were forcibly displaced because of conflict, violence, persecution, and events seriously disturbing public order (UNHCR, 2024a). This means that one in every 67 people worldwide is displaced, almost double the number just a decade ago. Three-quarters of these people are living in countries that have high-to-extreme exposure to climate-related hazards and half of all forcibly displaced people live in places that are affected by the compound impact of both climate-related hazards and conflicts – including, but not limited to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Lebanon, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen (Craparo, et al., forthcoming).

Although conflict remains the primary cause of cross-border displacement, the impacts of climate change can aggravate tensions and weaken social cohesion. Through its unevenly distributed impacts, climate change can deepen existing inequalities. The effect of rising temperatures on the availability of natural resources such as fresh water and productive land can exacerbate social tensions.

Meanwhile, violent conflict reduces people's ability to prepare for and recover from climate-related shocks and stresses (Savelli A., et al., 2023). Considering the growing number of conflict-related displacements and that the climate crisis and environmental degradation are undermining the potential for people to return to their places of origin, investment in climate change adaptation by host communities and affected populations in fragile and conflict-affected settings can also be seen as an investment in peaceful coexistence.

The interaction of climate change, conflict and displacement is particularly visible across the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa (see Box 1). The ongoing conflict in Sudan has displaced over 11 million people, including over 2 million people hosted in neighbouring countries, with nearly 700,000 million of those people in Chad as of October 2024 (UNHCR, 2024c). Despite being one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, Chad has kept its doors open to refugees coming from Sudan and other countries (ND-Gain, 2022). In eastern Chad, where many refugees are located, heavy rains and flooding routinely destroy shelters and basic infrastructure and contaminate fresh water (UNICEF, 2024). Combined with the security risks people face from armed groups along the Sudan-Chad border and limited humanitarian support, the impacts of climate change are exacerbating the already harsh living conditions (UNHCR, 2024d).

Chad. More than 700,000 Sudanese refugees have fled to Chad
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

BOX 1

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Following a devastating drought across the arid zone of the Horn of Africa between late 2020 and early 2023, much of the region was subsequently struck by El Niño-spurred heavy rains and flooding in 2023 and early 2024. This extreme interannual climate variability, impacting areas of high fragility, underlines the importance of disaster risk reduction in fragile and conflict-affected settings and refugee-hosting states. Displaced populations have noted that the earlier drought reduced their ability to cope with subsequent disasters (REACH 2024).

In recent years, droughts and floods were some of the most reported disasters across Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. In Somalia, natural hazards were often reported more frequently than conflict and insecurity as the reason for internal displacement. In 2022 alone, over 600,000 people were displaced by violent conflict while approximately 1.3 million individuals were internally displaced due to the drought, the highest number in more than a decade (Tarif K., 2024). In 2023, the convergence of drought, conflict, and flooding, resulted in the internal displacement of an additional 912,000 people in Somalia. In early May 2023, due to heavy rainfall in Ethiopia, the Shabelle River overflowed in Belet Weyne, Somalia's fifth largest city. This wreaked havoc on roughly 90 per cent of the city, including vital infrastructure. The consequences were profound: essential services faltered, hospitals ceased operation, and prices skyrocketed (REACH, 2023).

This highlights that environment and livelihood zones, but also the adverse effects of climate change, stretch across borders. Understanding and addressing their transboundary nature from a regional perspective can enhance our preparedness for and response to these issues.

Ethiopia. Somali refugee mother hopes to build a future with family in exile.
© UNHCR/Diana Diaz

Uneven impacts

Populations in fragile and conflict-affected settings are especially vulnerable to climate-related risks (see figure 2). The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment highlights how "vulnerability to climate change is higher in locations with poverty, governance challenges, limited access to basic services and resources, violent conflict and a reliance on climate-sensitive livelihoods" (IPCC, 2022). The intersection of climate-related risks and conflict disrupts social, economic, and political structures, and can undermine societies' climate resilience (Hallegatte et al., 2020). These overlapping impacts complicate governance, weaken infrastructure, and hamper effective resource management and humanitarian access (Pacillo G., et al., 2024). The Southern Africa region experiences complex population flows that combine elements of forced displacement, voluntary migration, and circular mobility patterns. Climate change is likely to further complicate these dynamics. For instance, prolonged droughts may drive rural-to-urban migration, while sudden-onset disasters, such as the severe cyclones that the region experienced in recent years, could trigger cross-border displacement. These movements often follow established routes, which may become flashpoints for increased conflict and fragility as climate pressures intensify. Key corridors, such as those from Zimbabwe and Mozambique into South Africa, or from the Democratic Republic of the Congo through Zambia, could see heightened tensions as resources become scarcer and population movements increase.

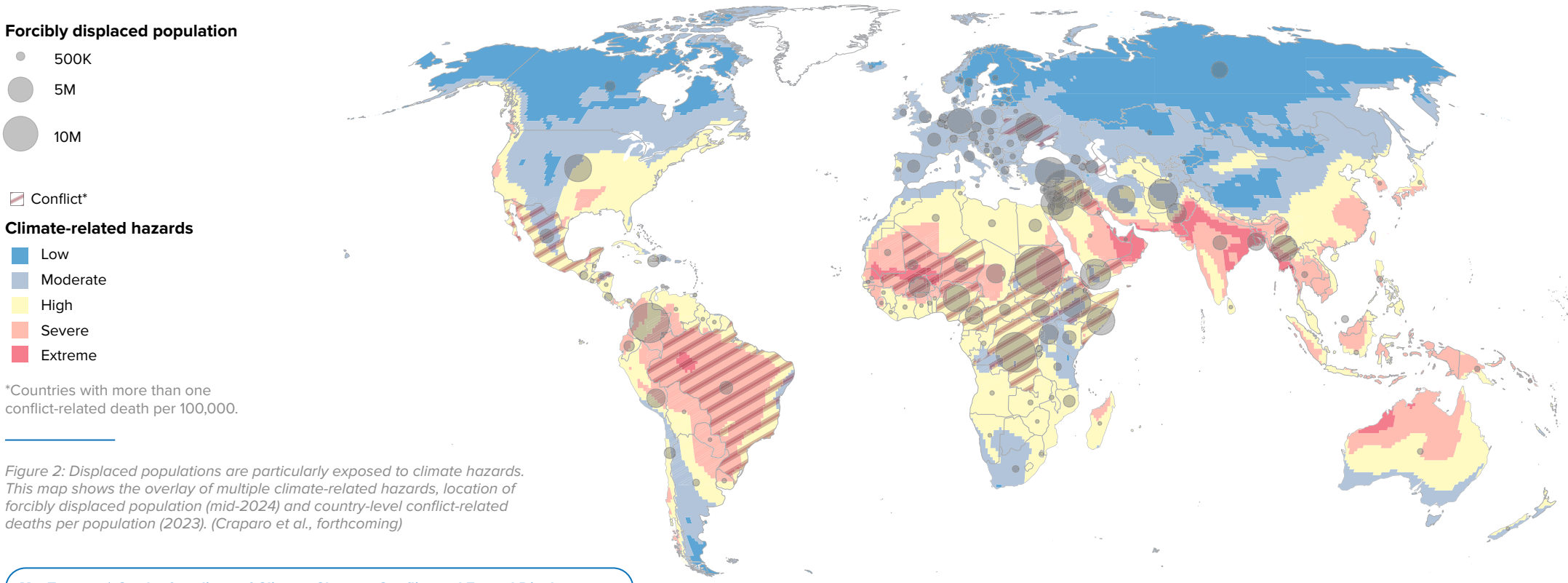


Figure 2: Displaced populations are particularly exposed to climate hazards. This map shows the overlay of multiple climate-related hazards, location of forcibly displaced population (mid-2024) and country-level conflict-related deaths per population (2023). (Craparo et al., forthcoming)

Forcibly displaced population

500K

5M

10M

Conflict*

*Countries with more than one conflict-related death per 100,000.

Climate-related hazards

- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Severe
- Extreme

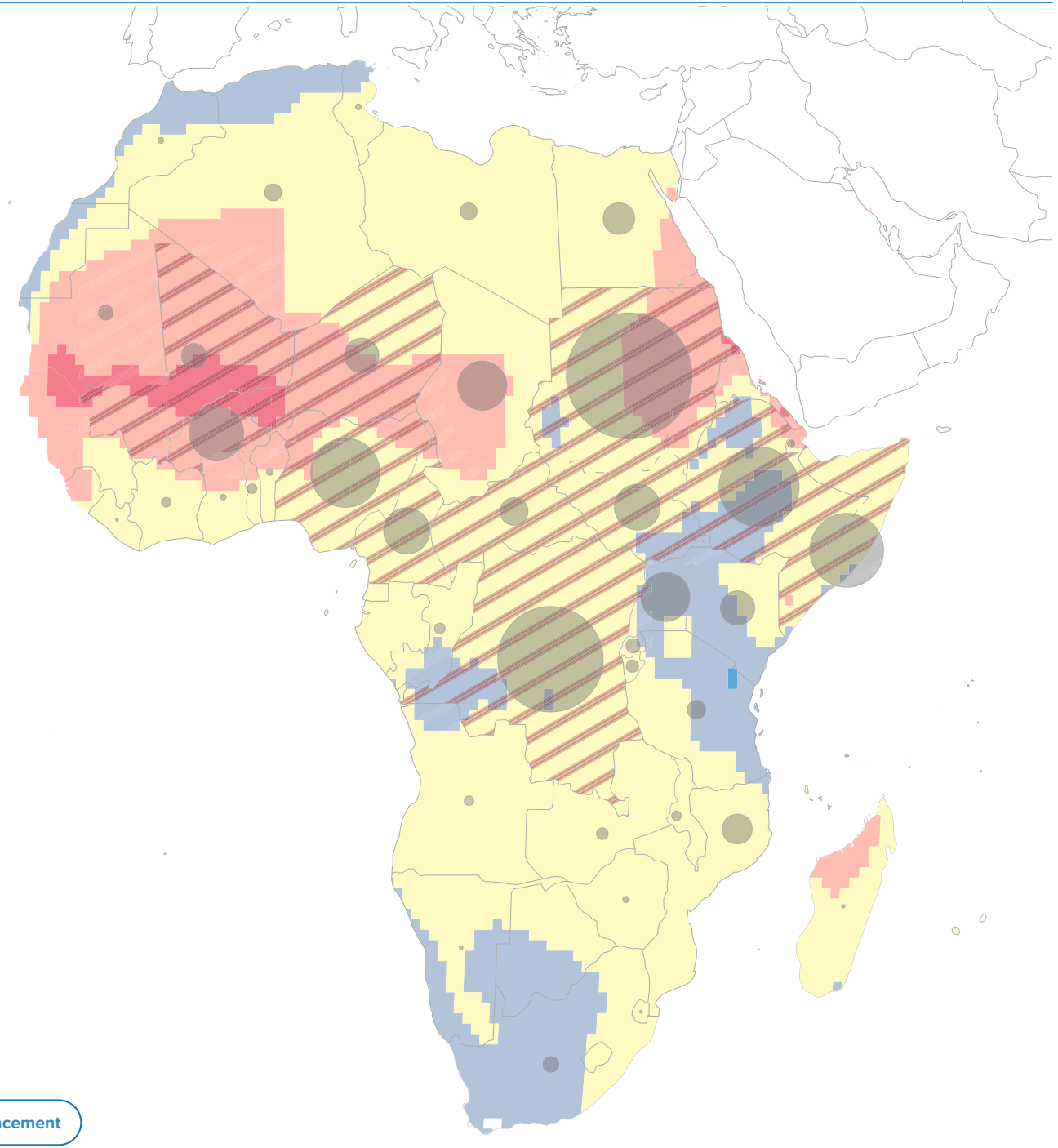


Figure 2a: regional map to figure 2.

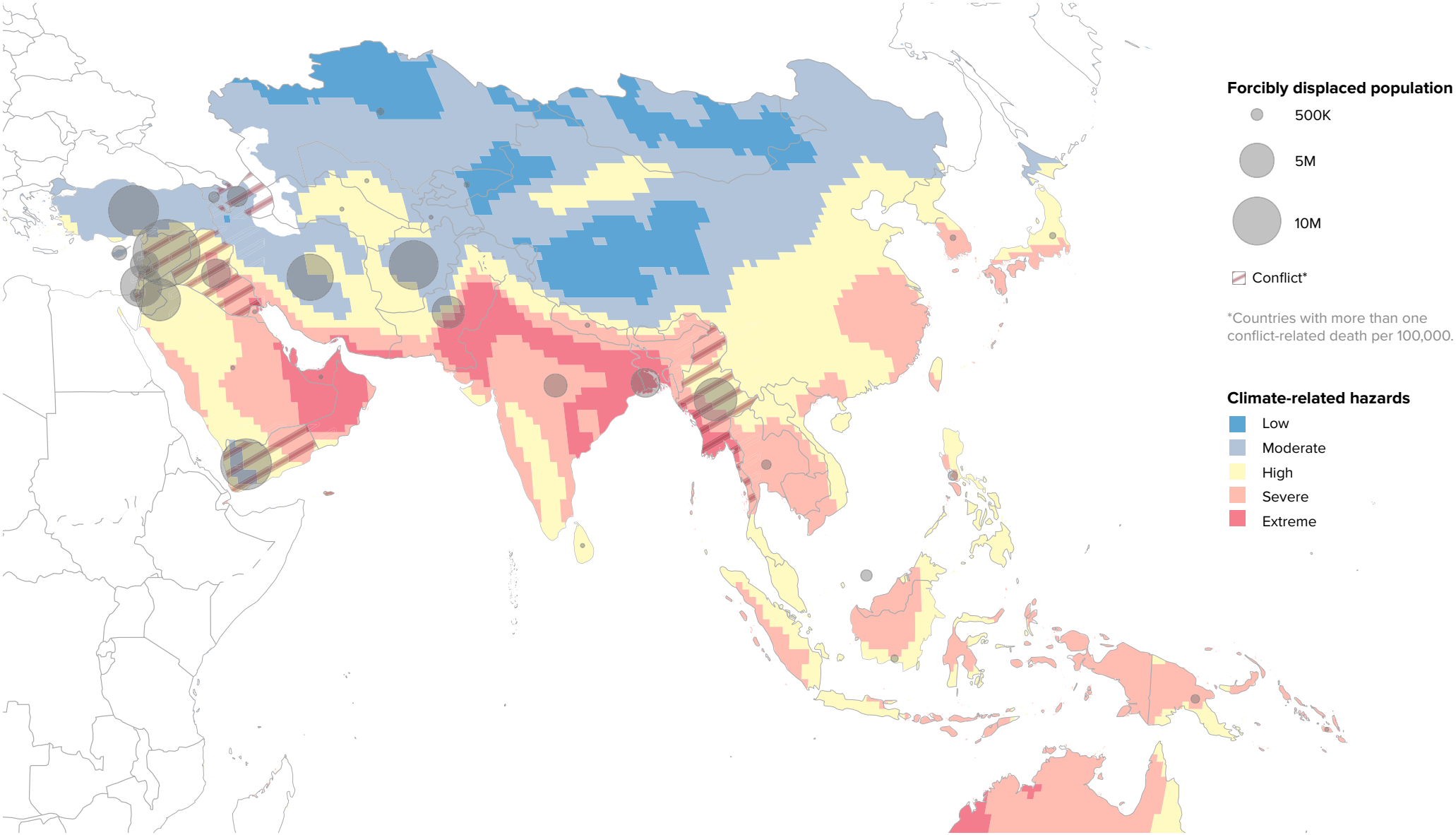


Figure 2b: regional map to figure 2.

While the impacts of climate change and conflict pose unequivocal threats to human well-being and security, not all people are equally affected. Displacement driven by the climate crisis is already a global reality, one that both reflects and amplifies deep-seated inequalities and injustices. Population groups that already struggle with socio-economic challenges, including gender inequalities, age, and disability-based discrimination, are typically less able to withstand the stresses caused by extreme weather events (IMF, 2023). Women and girls, who are less likely to own productive assets and are more dependent on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods, are disproportionately affected by climate change (UN Women, 2015). Social norms often assign women and girls tasks like gathering food, water, and fuel – responsibilities made more challenging by climate change (UN Women, 2015). This heightened vulnerability not only impacts their physical safety but also increases the risk of gender-based violence, as they may have to traverse unsafe areas to access essential water or firewood (UNHCR, 2022a). People with disabilities also have additional needs that often go unaddressed in situations of forced displacement.

Cameroon. Rifkatu and Saratu, refugees from Nigeria now living in Minawao camp in Cameroon's Far North Region, using cocoon technology to plant trees. They are members of the camp's environment committee
© UNHCR/Caroline Irby

Compounding risks

Extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts compound the threats faced by displaced populations particularly in fragile and conflict-affected areas where the capacity to adapt is already stretched (see Box 2). This not only strains local resources but can also heighten tensions between displaced populations and host communities, potentially sparking new conflicts. As climate change impacts worsen, these interconnected risks can intensify, thereby creating a vicious cycle. An example of this can be seen in the White Nile basin, which spans parts of Uganda, South Sudan, and Sudan. The region has experienced severe displacement after flooding that compounds ongoing conflicts and governance challenges, making it a hotspot for future disaster-driven displacement. In 2022 alone, the White Nile basin saw a record-breaking 933,000 internal displacements, of which over half a million were triggered by floods (IDMC, 2024).

BOX 2

GEOSPATIAL REMOTE SENSING IN 30 SETTLEMENTS

From 2022 to 2023, the UNHCR and the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT), conducted a geospatial and hydrological analysis of 30 displacement settlements across 15 highly climate-vulnerable countries in Africa, in addition to Yemen and Bangladesh. This study focused on events such as floods, drought, and deforestation to identify which settlements faced risks in order to then design mitigation measures. The analysis revealed that 40 per cent of the settlements analysed were at a medium-to-high risk of flooding, 36 per cent of them faced an elevated risk of drought, and 47 per cent showed varying trends of deforestation.

The analysis also revealed insights into how effective adaptation measures can significantly reduce displaced communities' exposure to risks and potential damage from climate and environmental shocks. This will help them better prepare for, withstand, and recover from such events. While these measures can require financial investment, often extending beyond refugee settlement boundaries, the investment remains lower than the cost of repairing damage (UNHCR, 2024g).

South Sudan. Years of flooding leaves thousands permanently displaced in Bentiu.
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

In sum, people who flee their homes to escape conflict and violence may be forced to flee again because of floods and other extreme weather events (see Box 3). Over the past 10 years, weather-related disasters have caused some 220 million internal displacements – equivalent to approximately 60,000 displacements per day (IDMC, 2024). In 2023, 42 out of the 45 countries that reported conflict displacement also experienced disaster displacement (IDMC, GRID, 2024). By the end of 2023, over 70 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers originate from highly climate-vulnerable countries that are also least ready to improve their resilience. (ND-GAIN, 2022).

Climate-related disasters can trap IDPs and refugees in cycles of onward and protracted displacement (see Box 4). In May 2024, devastating rainfall, and flooding in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul caused the death of 181 people, affecting 2.3 million people and displacing 580,000 individuals from their homes (UNHCR, 2024e). The floods resulted in billions of dollars of economic damage that will take many years to repair (UNHCR, 2023a). Among those impacted are 43,000 vulnerable refugees from Venezuela, Haiti, and Cuba, who were located in some of the most flood-affected areas in the region. (UNHCR, 2024f).

Honduras. The sea continues to encroach upon the streets of Cedeño, swallowing more of the town with each year.
© UNHCR/Tomás Ayuso

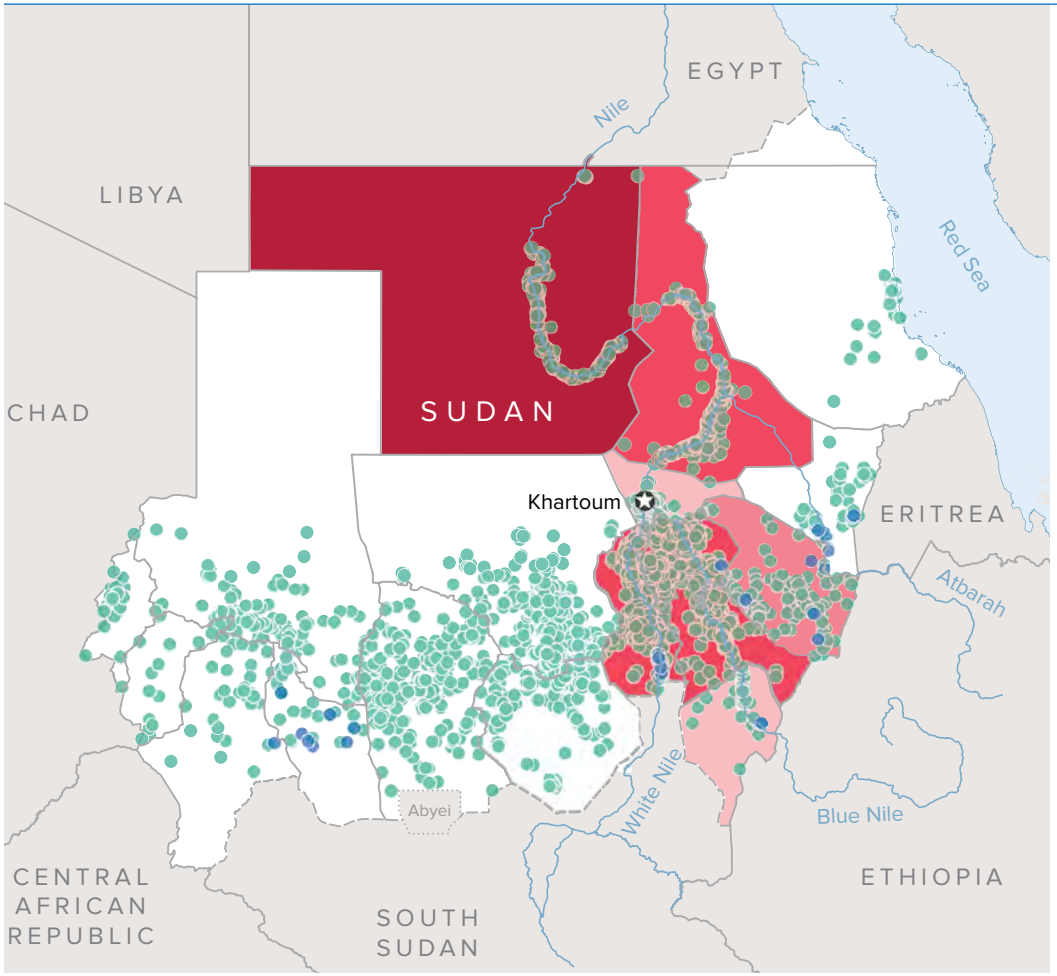
BOX 3

THE DEVASTATING IMPACTS OF CYCLONE MOCHA IN MYANMAR

Cyclone Mocha, the most severe storm to hit Myanmar in years, made landfall on the coast of Rakhine State in May 2023 causing widespread destruction. Rakhine was already home to over 228,000 people forced from their homes by bouts of intercommunal violence and conflict, including almost 160,000 ethnic Rohingya, who have been living in overcrowded camps since 2012.

The storm surge carried away almost everything owned by Ma Phyu Ma, an internally displaced Rohingya, and her family. **"Every little piece lost was precious to me... we had very little to begin with,"** she said. **"The hut was our shelter. The boat and nets allowed us to fish. The clothes were my source of income. It is painful for me to lose everything."**

Ma Phyu Ma, 37, stands amid the debris left by Cyclone Mocha, which hit Myanmar's western Rakhine State on 14 May 2023.
© UNHCR/Reuben Lim Wende



Location of forcibly displaced
(as of the end of December 2023)

- Refugee
- IDP

Forcibly displaced populations at risk of floods

High Low

Figure 3: Refugee and IDP settlements and camps at risk of flooding as a result of a 100-year event (IDMC, 2024). Source: IOM-DTM and UNHCR (Dec 2023), IDMC and CIMA foundation

BOX 4

ASSESSING THE RISK OF DISASTER DISPLACEMENT IN IDP AND REFUGEE CAMPS AND SETTLEMENTS IN SUDAN

With the on-going conflict, people in Sudan are particularly vulnerable to the compounded impacts of conflict and disasters, which are triggering new and repeated displacements.

Overlaying the location of IDP and refugee settlements in Sudan with the risk of flooding from major rivers illustrates how exposed these populations are. As of the end of December 2023, there were a total of 6,000 IDP and refugee camps and settlements in Sudan, hosting over 5.3 million IDPs and almost 600,000 refugees. Many of those displaced are living in inadequate shelters or tents, sometimes in overcrowded conditions, leaving them particularly vulnerable to hazards.

When this information is overlaid with a flood displacement risk model, it reveals that half of the states in Sudan have IDP sites located in areas prone to overflowing rivers. The situation in the Northern and River Nile states is particularly concerning, as they were hosting nearly 1 million IDPs at the end of 2023. In Northern State, a quarter of the population living in IDP sites is at risk of further displacement from flooding. In River Nile State, more than one in every 10 IDPs, the equivalent to roughly 64,000 individuals, are at risk of being displaced again by riverine flooding.[1]

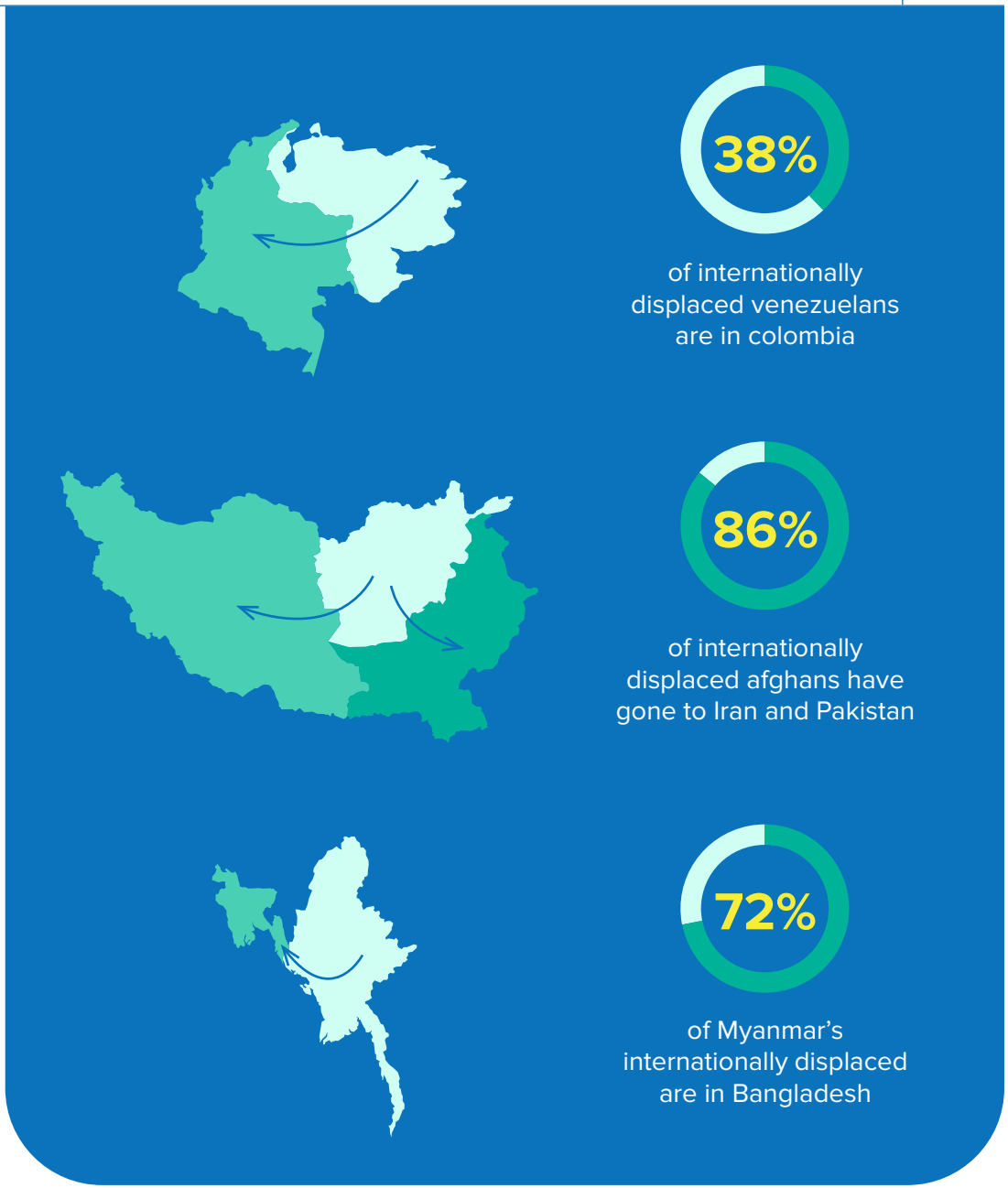
While tentative, the findings show the value of risk data to support humanitarian programming that is climate and disaster resilient. The results identify settlements and camps that are most at risk, given that some are in or near riverine flood-prone areas, and that both IDPs and refugees have limited ability to move elsewhere, either due to movement restrictions, persistent violence, or other factors.

1. These figures may be underestimates considering that the analysis is based on points (coordinates) instead of areas (polygons). The study also exclusively focused on the risk of riverine flood in the White Nile, Blue Nile, Nile and Atbara rivers' basin, excluding wadis (dry riverbeds that fill up during the rainy season).

No escape

Forcibly displaced people are increasingly finding themselves with nowhere safe to go, as the impacts of climate change not only devastate their homelands but also threaten their destinations. Most forcibly displaced people are leaving areas and countries with numerous climate-related hazards, only to arrive in places facing equal or greater risks (see Figure 4). For instance, 38 per cent of internationally displaced Venezuelans – nearly 3 million people – have moved to Colombia, a country already grappling with severe natural hazards. Similarly, 86 per cent of internationally displaced Afghans, refugees and asylum-seekers have sought refuge in Iran and Pakistan, countries that both experience even higher climate risks. Hailing from one of the most climate-vulnerable countries, 72 per cent of Myanmar's internationally displaced people, including registered refugees and asylum-seekers, find themselves in Bangladesh, where natural hazards are classified as extreme. In other words, the climate crisis often pushes already vulnerable populations from one danger to another. An estimated 23.5 million of the people who are currently displaced are from countries that are predicted to be more exposed to climate hazards in the future (Figure 4). In countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador, Central African Republic, Somalia, and Yemen, climate-related hazards are projected to double in intensity or become 10 times more frequent by 2040 (Craparo, et al., forthcoming). This would significantly increase the exposure of any returnees to extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, storms, and severe heat.

Vulnerable populations, including tens of millions of refugees and people living in displacement, are typically the least responsible for climate change but are often the least able to prepare, adapt, and recover from its impacts. Despite bearing the brunt of climate impacts, they are frequently overlooked in global responses, left to navigate the growing challenges with limited support (see Box 5).



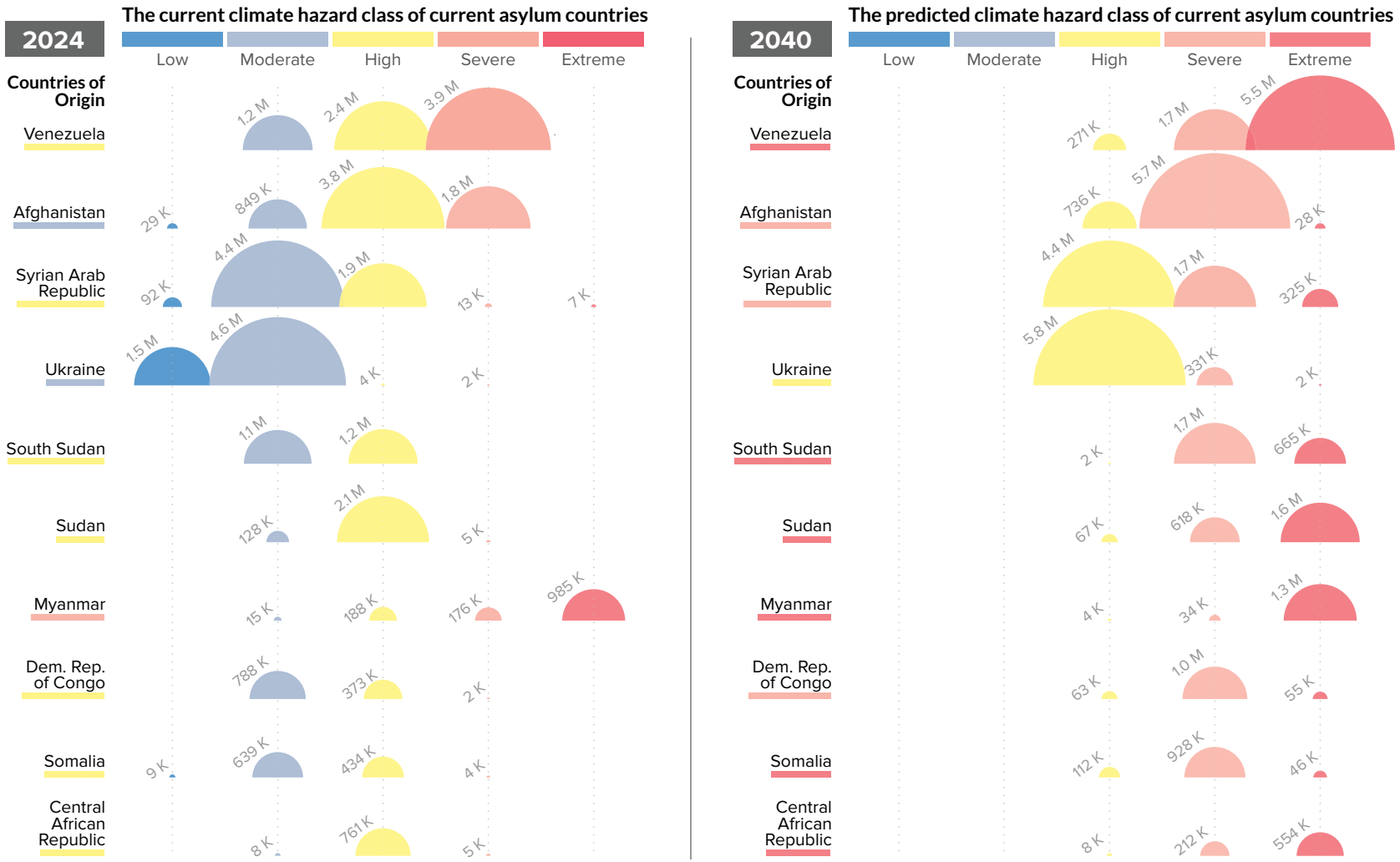
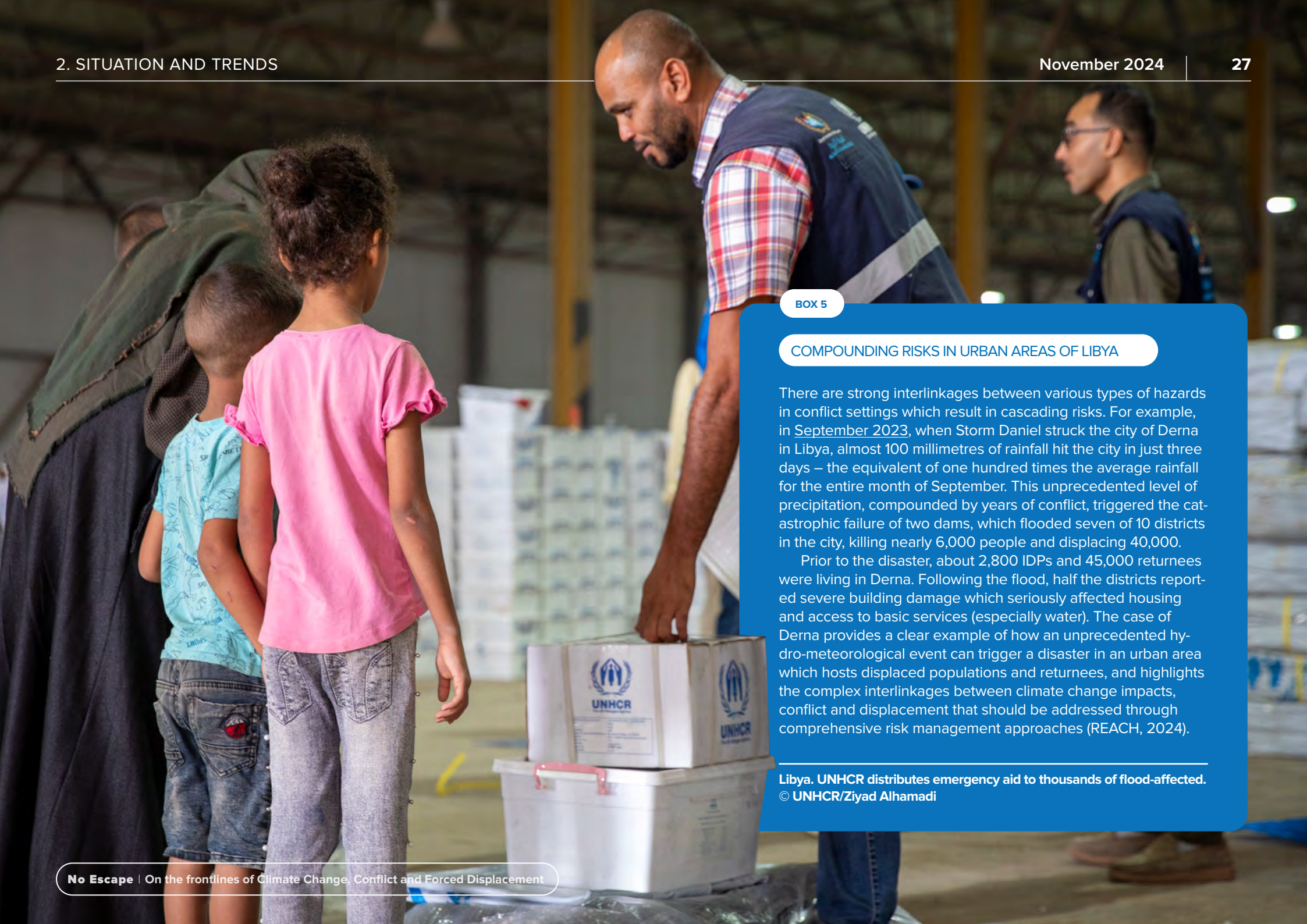


Figure 4: Climate hazard classes for the top eight countries of origin (highest number of refugees, asylum-seekers, and others in need of international protection), and related countries of asylum under (a) baseline climate conditions and (b) the future. Countries of origin are displayed on the left of (a) and (b), the colour of the bars underneath represents the severity of the climate-related hazards that the country faces. The colour of the half-moons depicts the severity of the climate-related hazards in the related countries of asylum. The size of the half-moon illustrates the number of refugees, asylum-seekers, and others in need of international protection from each of the eight countries of origin hosted in countries of asylum with the same climate hazard classes. To exemplify, there are 1.8 million refugees and asylum-seekers originating from Afghanistan hosted in countries of asylum that face severe climate-related hazards. The number of asylum countries grouped in one half-moon can vary per class. The numbers of refugees, asylum-seekers, and others in need of international protection is based on mid-2024 data.



BOX 5

COMPOUNDING RISKS IN URBAN AREAS OF LIBYA

There are strong interlinkages between various types of hazards in conflict settings which result in cascading risks. For example, in September 2023, when Storm Daniel struck the city of Derna in Libya, almost 100 millimetres of rainfall hit the city in just three days – the equivalent of one hundred times the average rainfall for the entire month of September. This unprecedented level of precipitation, compounded by years of conflict, triggered the catastrophic failure of two dams, which flooded seven of 10 districts in the city, killing nearly 6,000 people and displacing 40,000.

Prior to the disaster, about 2,800 IDPs and 45,000 returnees were living in Derna. Following the flood, half the districts reported severe building damage which seriously affected housing and access to basic services (especially water). The case of Derna provides a clear example of how an unprecedented hydro-meteorological event can trigger a disaster in an urban area which hosts displaced populations and returnees, and highlights the complex interlinkages between climate change impacts, conflict and displacement that should be addressed through comprehensive risk management approaches (REACH, 2024).

Libya. UNHCR distributes emergency aid to thousands of flood-affected.
© UNHCR/Ziyad Alhamadi

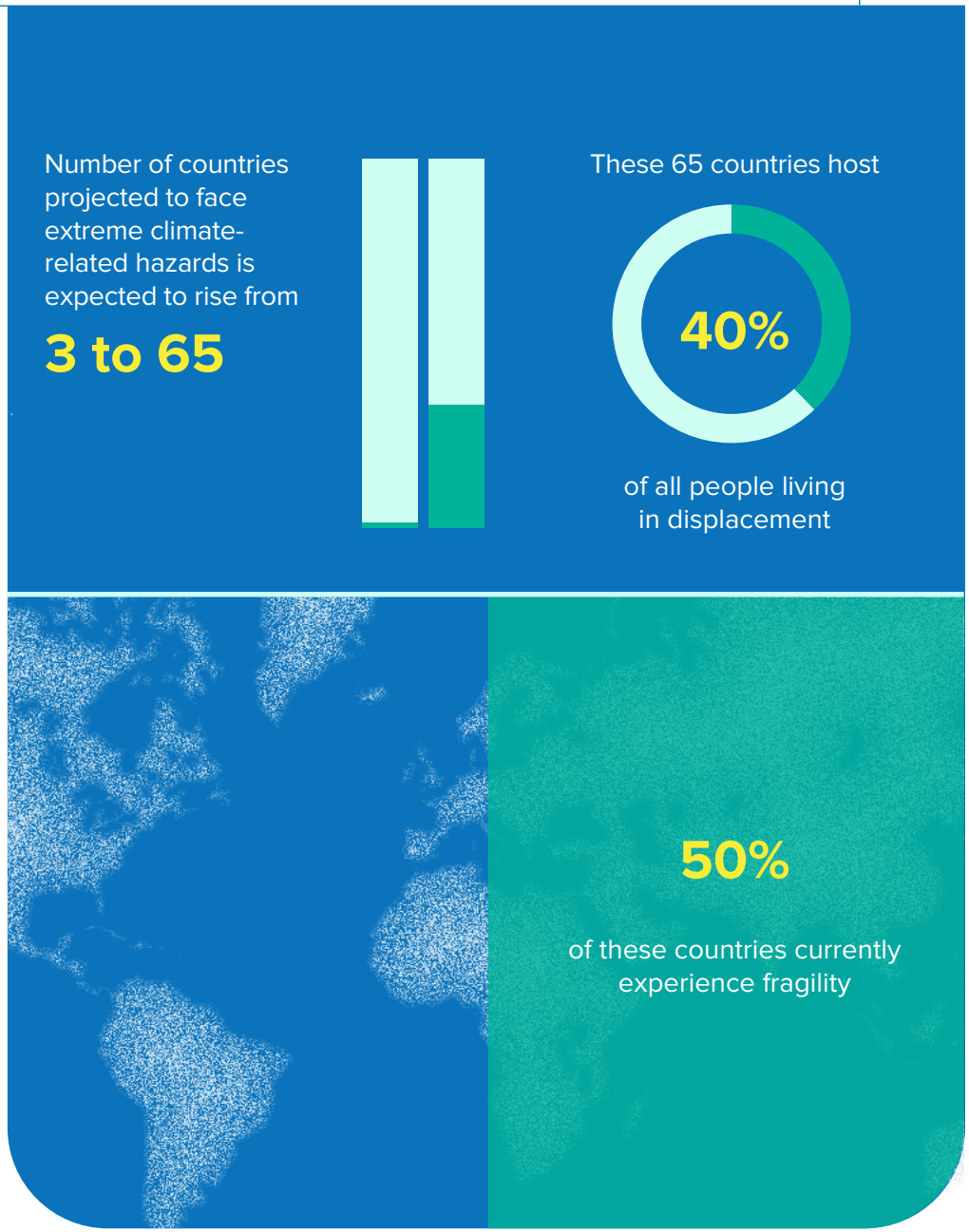
Costa Rica. Growing numbers of refugees cross into Nicaragua heading north
© UNHCR/Nicolo Filippo Rosso

Food insecurity and malnutrition further increase the vulnerability of displaced people. In 2024, nearly 282 million people across 59 countries and territories faced acute food insecurity. Of those food crisis-hit countries, two-thirds experienced food insecurity due to conflict and climate change impacts (FSIN, GRFC, 2024). Women are particularly vulnerable, with a 27 per cent higher chance than men of being severely food insecure (WFP, 2022). In 2023, over 90 million people forcibly displaced in the context of conflict and climate change impacts were living in countries and territories experiencing a food crisis (FSIN, GRFC, 2024). This is the case in South Sudan, for example, where ongoing conflicts and attacks on civilians have exacerbated the food crisis caused by drought and flooding, thereby severely impacting the resilience of the agropastoral communities that comprise a large portion of the country's population (South Sudan Protection Cluster, 2024).

Heightened vulnerability can drive negative, short-term coping strategies that increase the potential for harm over the medium to longer term. For example, women and girls who must walk long distances to collect water and fuel are at greater risk of gender-based violence. In Ethiopia, almost 50 per cent of refugee women report sexual violence when collecting firewood and almost 40 per cent cite exhaustion from crossing long distances to gather vital resources (UNHCR, CGIAR, 2024). Girls are particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change as they often miss school to spend long hours collecting water and firewood, limiting their future educational and employment opportunities. This heightens their susceptibility to early marriage, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability (Plan International, 2024). Equally, cutting down trees for fuel contributes to environmental degradation and increased exposure to natural hazards such as flooding and landslides. Changes in access to vital resources, such as clean water and fertile land can spark competition and affect local power relations. In Bangladesh, for example, environmental degradation caused by deforestation and over-extraction of resources in refugee camps has contributed to rising tensions with local communities (Sarkar S.K. et al., 2023). If these negative coping mechanisms and tensions in the context of climate change impacts are left unaddressed in forced displacement contexts, there is a real risk they can escalate into conflict (UNHCR, 2024h).

2.2. TRENDS

Forced displacement is forecast to increase internally and across borders as more frequent extreme weather events[2] intensify the root causes of fragility and conflict. At the same time, in coming years and decades, the risks faced by displaced people and their hosts from climate-related hazards are expected to grow significantly. By 2040, exposure to multiple climate-related hazards is projected to escalate, particularly in the Americas, West-Central Africa, and Southeast Asia (figure 5). The number of countries projected to face extreme climate-related hazards is expected to rise from 3 to 65[3], including many refugee-hosting countries like Cameroon, Chad, South Sudan, Nigeria, Brazil, India, and Iraq. Together, these 65 countries host over 40 per cent of all people currently living in displacement, while half of the countries experience fragility[4]. To exemplify this at the local level, the majority of all refugee and IDP camps and settlements in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region currently face high exposure to compound climate hazards. None is currently located in areas exposed to extreme climate hazards. However, by 2040, all settlements and camps are projected to experience severe or extreme climate hazards, with 65 per cent of the current site locations projected to face exposure to extreme climate hazards. Extreme heat is identified as the dominant hazard, both currently and for the future (Craparo et al., forthcoming).



2. Extreme compound hazards are events arising from the combination of extreme heat, drought or flood causing devastating impacts on livelihoods, property and ecosystems.

3. Subnational exposure to compound climate related hazards is averaged across all territories of a country to get a country-level exposure. Only countries predominantly exposed to extreme hazards throughout their territory are included. Extreme compound hazards are events arising from the combination of extreme heat, drought or flood causing devastating impacts on livelihoods, property and ecosystems

4. This report uses the OECD-determined list of states that experience fragility based on the following report: OECD (2022), States of Fragility 2022, OECD Publishing, Paris, France, 2022. In 2022, 58 states faced fragility, out of which 14 states experienced extreme fragility, and 44 states experienced other fragility.

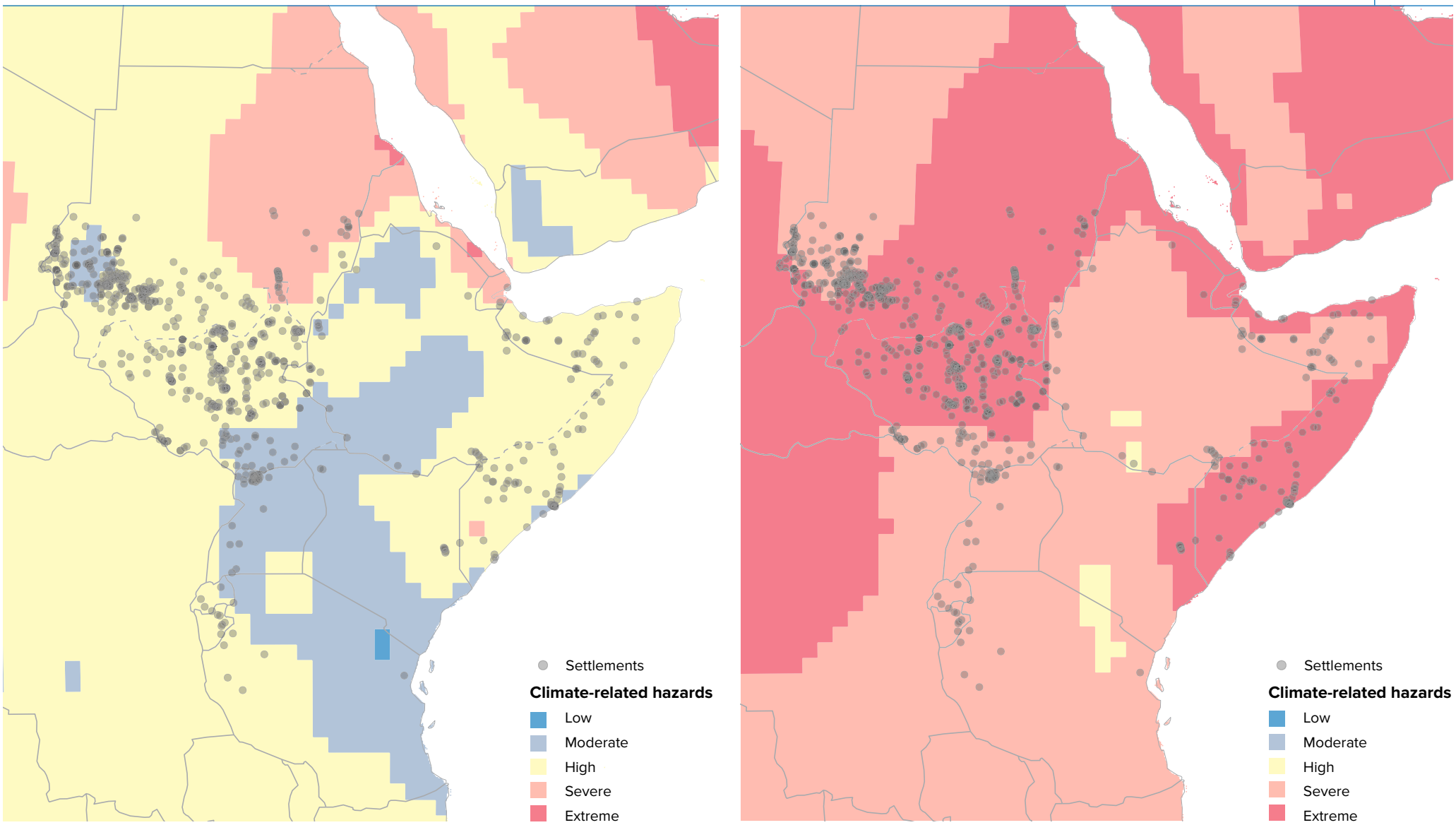


Figure 5: Exposure to compound climate-related hazards of formal and informal refugee and IDP settlements and camps in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region. The map on the left shows a baseline of current climate-related hazards, and the map on the right shows projections by 2040 (Craparo et, al., forthcoming).

High exposure and growing vulnerability

Armed conflict, environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change are likely to exacerbate the humanitarian needs of affected communities. Already, displaced people and their hosts are among the most exposed and vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change worldwide, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Lacking the necessary resources – such as stable housing, financial security, institutional support, or access to essential services – they struggle to prepare for or recover from disasters like floods, droughts, and heatwaves. In addition, refugee communities may face constraints such as limits to their free movement or restrictions on employment.

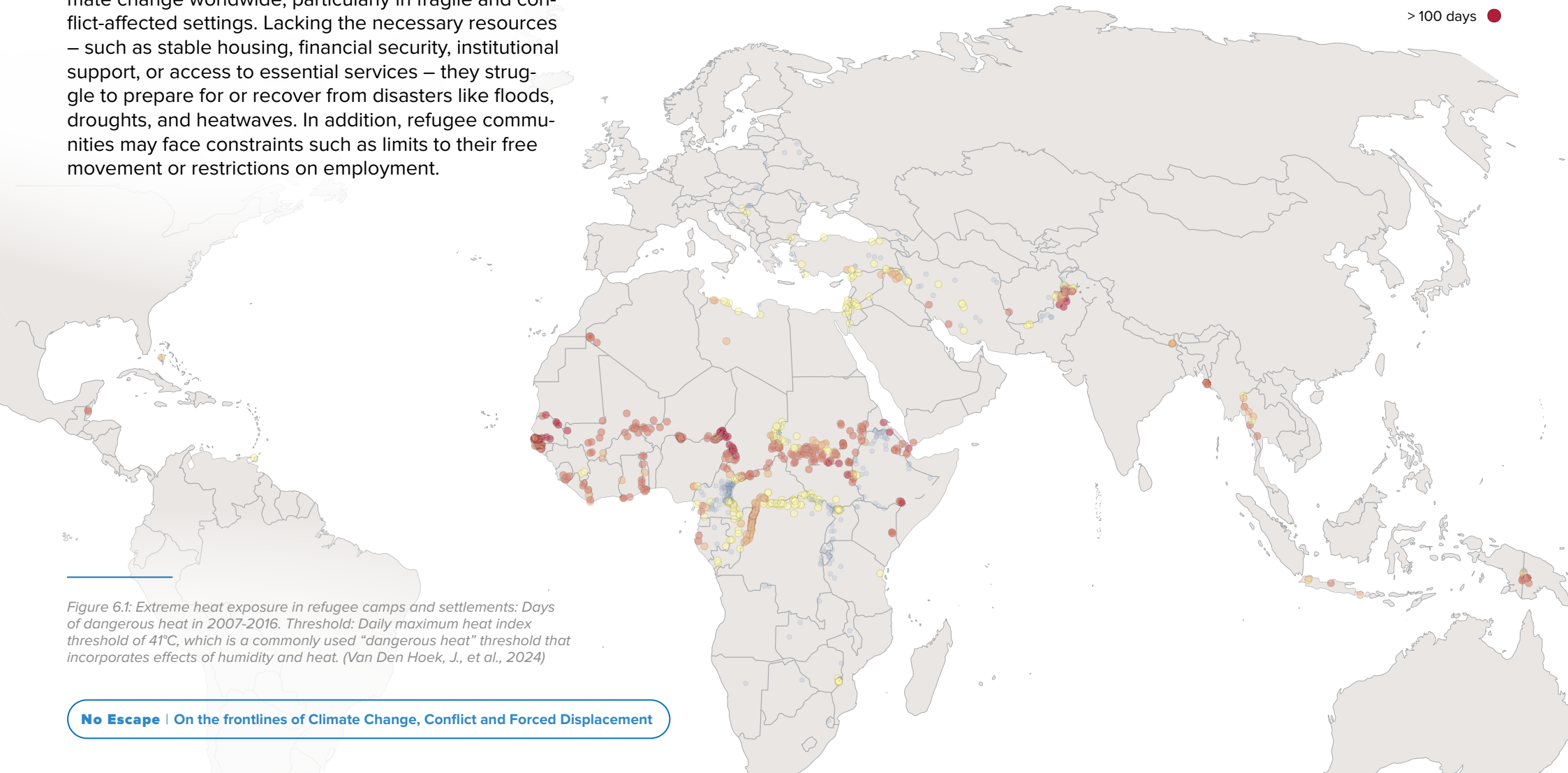


Figure 6.1: Extreme heat exposure in refugee camps and settlements: Days of dangerous heat in 2007-2016. Threshold: Daily maximum heat index threshold of 41°C, which is a commonly used "dangerous heat" threshold that incorporates effects of humidity and heat. (Van Den Hoek, J., et al., 2024)

By mid-century, most refugee camps and settlements are expected to endure twice as many days of dangerous heat (see figure 6). During the baseline period, between 2007-2016, 108 camps and settlements experienced 100 days or more of dangerous heat. These camps and settlements were in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Senegal. Yet with current trends, by 2050, this number will likely jump to 614 camps and settlements experiencing dangerous heat, with the top 10 hottest sites experiencing an additional 74 days of dangerous heat. As climate change accelerates, the frequency and severity of extreme heat events are increasing, and this trend is expected to continue if no drastic action is taken to reduce carbon emissions. Current protective measures fall short, and policies addressing extreme heat are often fragmented and underfunded (Van Den Hoek et al., 2024).[5]

Risks posed by extreme weather events in areas where people hope to locally integrate or return, pose significant barriers to achieving safe and sustainable solutions. As of mid-2024, almost 75 per cent of those returning from conflict-related displacement returned to countries that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.[6] As climate change worsens already dangerous conditions in both areas of origin and refuge, safe and sustainable solutions become increasingly elusive (see Box 6).

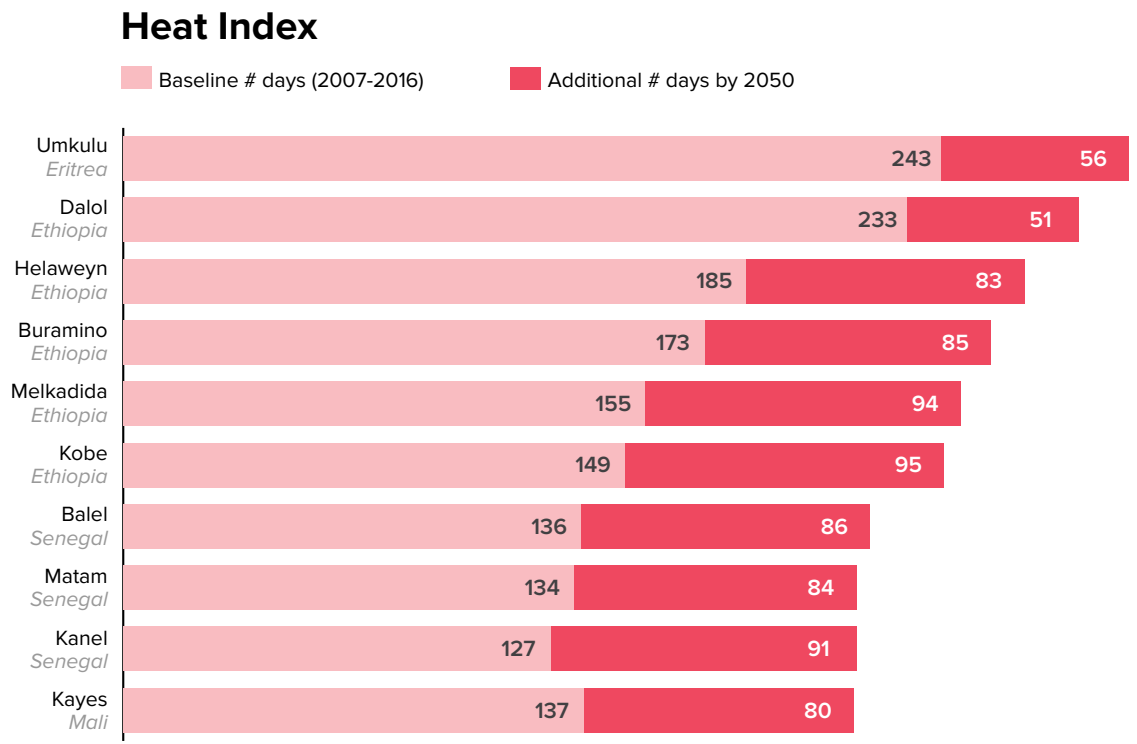


Figure 6.2: Heat exposure in the current top 10 hottest refugee camps and settlements by 2050: Threshold: Daily maximum heat index temperature threshold of 41°C, which is a commonly used "dangerous heat" threshold that incorporates effects of humidity and heat. (Van Den Hoek, J., et al., 2024)

5. Refugee camp locational data are from UNHCR (1) and include 1,344 refugee population locations, encompassing spontaneous locations, planned settlements, unplanned settlements, and dispersed locations. We exclude refugee population locations in Lebanon. Climate Hazards Center Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6 (CHC-CMIP6, 2) data were used to estimate historical (2007-2016) and future (2050) average annual heat stress at the location of all refugee camps worldwide. Using the CHC-CMIP6 observational record, the average annual number of days per year the daily maximum heat index (HImax) equaled or exceeded 41°C from 2007-2016 was estimated at each camp. Future heat stress for 2050 was estimated as the average annual number of days per year the daily maximum heat index (HImax) equaled or exceeded 41°C from 2007-2016 under a 2050 climate following SSP 245 at each camp location.

6. Authors own calculations based on UNHCR Returnee Data Mid-2024 and ND-Gain Index 2022.

BOX 6

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS CONTRIBUTE TO PREVENTING RETURN AND HINDERING INTEGRATION OF SOMALI REFUGEES IN DADAAB

For much of her adult life, Shamsa Amin Ali coped with occasional drought by moving to a nearby town and returning to her family's land in southern Somalia when the rains resumed. But after the rains failed for five seasons in a row, she lost hope and embarked on an eight-day trek to Kenya's Dadaab camps with her 82-year-old mother, children, and extended family. **"There was nothing to feed my children. They would cry, and cry, and cry,"** she recalled. **"At some point, I thought of taking my own life instead of watching them die of hunger in front of me."**

She initially hoped her stay in Dadaab would be temporary, but forecasts of a sixth failed rainy season dashed her hopes of returning home. **"I cannot go back to Somalia because the challenges are still there,"** Shamsa said. **"The drought is still there. My farm, animals and even my house have been destroyed, so there is nothing to go back to. I cannot go back where there are no schools for my children."**

Shamsa Amin Ali, 38, fled Somalia for Kenya's Dadaab camps in March 2022 after a prolonged drought withered her crops and killed her livestock, leaving her with nothing to feed her family. © UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

Mauritania. Refugee volunteers wage fight against bush fires near Malian camp
© UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

The climate crisis not only displaces people but also weakens the foundations needed to rebuild their lives or return in safety and dignity. Livelihoods are destroyed, social networks fractured, and economic activities destabilized, making it harder for displaced people to regain self-sufficiency (IPCC, 2022). It can also negatively impact health and well-being, including by driving increases in malaria and other vector-borne diseases, worsening mental health, and endangering maternal and child health (Corvalan C., et al., 2022 and WHO, 2023). The absence of adaptive capacity leaves displaced people highly vulnerable, making it even harder to build resilience to stresses. Consequently, displaced people are blocked from the path to recovery, leaving them trapped in precarious conditions (IPCC, 2022).

Durable solutions are critical to breaking this cycle. Areas experiencing drought, extreme heat, desertification, biodiversity loss,or increased intensity of conflict over natural resources, such as land and water, may become uninhabitable, rendering return impossible. Temporary shelters and short-term interventions cannot fully address the long-term needs of those displaced. Instead, investing in comprehensive, sustainable approaches – such as facilitating permanent resettlement, bolstering community resilience, including through decent work, and integrating climate adaptation into national policies – can offer forcibly displaced populations the stability they urgently need. These solutions must be accompanied by conflict-sensitive and conflict-prevention approaches.

These cascading risks are compounded by the failure of governments and industries to meet their climate policy-related commitments. Despite the urgent need to meet targets set in the Paris Agreement, Parties' commitments to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions as stated in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) still fall woefully below what is needed to keep within the 1.5°C ceiling set in the Paris Agreement. The current trajectory puts the world on course for a temperature increase of 2.6 – 3.1°C, which poses significant risks to human health, and habitability in some regions (UNFCCC, 2015). At the same time, governments are failing to provide the required resources to allow communities to create necessary adaptive capacities to become resilient to the impacts of climate change, including in displacement contexts.

Cameroon. Planting 2,000 trees in the Far North region of Cameroon to help combat desertification.
© UNHCR/Eugene Sibomana

3. Enabling action

Protection, Inclusion, Participation, and Finance

Addressing the impacts of climate change and conflict on forced displacement and associated protection needs demands action on a number of fronts. It requires application of international refugee and human rights law for those who have been displaced across borders and who are in need of international protection. International human rights law and other standards relevant to the rights of internally displaced people, including the Kampala Convention, also need to be respected. It involves ensuring the inclusion and participation of refugees and IDPs in efforts to adapt to climate change and reduce the risk of climate-related disasters. And the world community needs to act to prevent forced displacement from occurring in the first place, to break the cycle of onward and protracted displacement and to help forcibly displaced people return to their homes and communities.

Eman and her husband Mohamad with their two children Zayad & Ola arrived in Egypt in February 2024, after fleeing war in Sudan. The family is from Khartoum, where they both worked in stable jobs with their children in school. They fled for their safety, leaving everything behind. In this photo the family is having their paperwork processed, which includes retina scans and registration in the system at the UNHCR Reception Center in Cairo, Egypt.
© UNHCR/Christina Rizk

3.1. PROTECTION THROUGH APPLICATION OF LEGAL, NORMATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Most people forced to leave their homes stay within their own countries. In such cases, UNHCR and partners provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDPs and their hosts as part of a collective response in support of states and affected populations.[7] In certain situations, however, people are forced to flee across international borders and may therefore be entitled to international protection under international refugee and human rights law.[8] For example, people may have a valid claim for refugee status where the adverse effects of climate change interact with armed conflict and violence or other grounds for persecution. Some vulnerable people might be at higher risk of trafficking or recruitment by armed groups. Equally, a well-founded fear of persecution may arise if groups or individuals are denied access to assistance, or services based on discrimination linked to ethnicity, caste, social group, or political opinion.

Individuals fleeing the adverse effects of climate change and disasters and conflicts may qualify for refugee status under the 1951 International Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees if they meet the criteria of a well-founded fear of persecution. Assessing asylum claims arising in the context of climate change impacts and disasters requires a comprehensive, forward-looking analysis of all relevant circumstances. This includes considering both immediate and long-term impacts, as well as an analysis of the individual circumstances of the flight in light of the overall protection environment of the affected persons. This review would also examine their inclusion – or lack thereof – into disaster risk reduction and adaptation strategies. Certain populations, such as women, children, elderly individuals, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups may be particularly vulnerable to persecution resulting from the adverse effects of climate change and disasters. These vulnerabilities can be exacerbated by discriminatory practices and inadequate state responses (UNHCR, 2018).

Regional refugee definitions, including their criteria related to displacement due to events seriously disturbing public order under the 1969 OAU Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration might be applicable to individuals displaced across borders in the context of climate change impacts and disasters. The concept of "events seriously disturbing public order" under these definitions can encompass situations where climate change impacts, environmental degradation, and disaster impacts disrupt societal stability.[9] That could include, for instance, situations of famine resulting from conflict or state conduct, thus potentially qualifying individuals for refugee status.[10] To qualify as a refugee under the 1969 OAU Convention and the Cartagena Declaration, individuals must be compelled to leave their habitual residence due to severe disruptions in public order, including when it is associated with sudden or slow onset events or other climate change impacts. The impact of such events might put them at risk of serious harm, compelling them to seek protection abroad. The severity of the climate change or disaster impacts and their ability to compel displacement depend on factors such as the disaster's progression, its proximity, its effects on the person's rights, and the state's response. Needs for international protection might arise if the state fails to address these impacts effectively, even with international assistance. The regional Conventions were applied in the situations of the displacement of Somalis to Kenya and Ethiopia in the context of drought and conflict; and Mexico during the displacement of Haitians after the 2010 earthquake and the subsequent human violations that broke out in the country (UNHCR, 2018).

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7. See Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement and UNHCR Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response for more information.

8. UNHCR, (2020), Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters, UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland, 2020, UNHCR, (2023), Climate change impacts and cross-border displacement: International refugee law and UNHCR's mandate, UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland, 2023; see also In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change, UNHCR, 2018.

9. See Assessing serious disturbances to public order under the 1969 OAU Convention, including in the context of disasters, environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change, Cleo Hansen-Lohrey, UNHCR, 2023

10. See Legal considerations on refugee protection for people fleeing conflict and famine affected countries, UNHCR, 2017

Brazil. Gloriane Antoine, 41, Haitian refugee teacher and her daughter Marybelle, 2, at the construction site for the office of her refugee-led organization "Fanmnwa" in Brasília. © UNHCR/Marina Calderon

Climate change and disasters can significantly impair the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, such as the right to life, physical integrity, health, and adequate standard of living. In specific circumstances, these impacts may result in threats to individual freedoms and lives, potentially leading to persecution and triggering application of the non-refoulement principle under international human rights law.

The refugee protection agenda must mainstream climate change impact-related considerations, and conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive climate action to remain relevant and effective in the face of growing climate change impacts and to contribute toward building peace and social cohesion. As displacement occurs in the context of climate change impacts and related disasters, the frameworks that govern refugee protection must be applied whenever relevant to prevent and address protection risks that might arise in situations involving climate change impacts and displacement. This means incorporating climate risk assessments into refugee response strategies, ensuring that refugee camps and settlements are resilient to climate change impacts, and advocating for the inclusion of refugees in the context of climate change impacts in international refugee protection frameworks. By breaking down these silos, both climate policy and refugee protection frameworks and instruments can be mutually reinforcing, leading to more comprehensive solutions for the world's most vulnerable populations (UNHCR, 2022b).

The increasing influence of climate change impacts, environmental degradation, and disasters on human mobility require innovative legal and normative measures to protect people in need of protection who may have no other legal options available. Some of the solutions include promoting the use of humanitarian visas and other forms of temporary protection to protect displaced people in need who have no other legal options; enhancing cooperation for coherence of legal, normative and policy frameworks governing various forms of human mobility (namely displacement, migration and planned relocation) in an integrated and rights-based manner; and systematically including displacement and migration as related but distinct phenomena in human mobility frameworks and strategies.

For example, since the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010, Brazil has been granting humanitarian residence for Haitians nationals arriving in the country. As of 2024, over 90,000 Haitian nationals live in the country. Brazil Immigration legislation issued by Brazil in 2017 provides for humanitarian visas and temporary residence for different situations including "calamity of great proportion, environmental disaster" (see article 14). Humanitarian visas and temporary residence are currently being issued for Haitian nationals.

The vast majority of displaced people remain within the borders of their countries where constitutions, national legislations and policies govern the rights of internally displaced people. However, general legislation often fails to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of IDPs, to clarify the roles and responsibilities of competent authorities, or to allocate necessary resources for their protection and assistance. Out of 113 IDP-specific instruments in the UNHCR global database of legal instruments, 39 address displacement in the context of climate change and disasters and only five address them exclusively. Furthermore, only 30 per cent of the 113 instruments consider conflict, violence, and disasters at the same time (UNHCR, 2022b). Therefore, it is essential to develop, adopt, and implement IDP-specific and IDP-inclusive normative frameworks and instruments to support government responses to IDPs, or alternatively, amend existing laws to address internal displacement issues (see Box 7) (UNHCR, 2022b).

BOX 7

THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDP-SPECIFIC INSTRUMENTS IN MEXICO

In 2019, the Mexican government officially recognized forced internal displacement due to pressures arising from displacement tied to violence perpetrated by criminal groups, land conflicts, climate change and extreme weather events, marking a pivotal step toward protecting IDPs. In 2022, after a review of Mexico's legal and policy framework, the government adopted a new roadmap to strengthen protection. At the same time, the Supreme Court, in collaboration with international organizations, developed a manual to guide judicial processes related to IDPs, setting the stage for more effective legal support.

At the state level, progress began earlier. In 2012, Chiapas became the first state to adopt the law for the Prevention and Assistance to Internal Displacement, followed by Guerrero in 2014, Sinaloa in 2020 and Zacatecas in 2022. Most recently, the Government of Oaxaca initiated the development of a new IDP law, following various consultations with displaced people, that is expected to be adopted before the end of 2024. Recently, the municipality of Apatzingán, Michoacán, approved a protocol for the response to internal displacement emergencies, the first binding legal instrument in Mexico to address internal displacement events at the municipal level.

Several federal entities have started addressing internal displacement within existing national frameworks, including the National Development Plan (2019-2024), which aims to eliminate migration driven by hunger or violence, and the National Programme for Human Rights (2020-2024). Additionally, the Executive Commission for Victims Assistance created a protocol to address forced displacement, aligned with the General Law of Victims (2013), ensuring that displaced individuals receive specialized and differentiated assistance, although there are several challenges for displaced people to access the Victims System. In addition, due to the need for coordinated efforts, the Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB) and UNHCR presented the "Guide for the registration of internally displaced persons in Mexico", the first guide to assist in the design and implementation of the registration of internally displaced people. While state and federal initiatives are steps in the right direction, the absence of a comprehensive federal law remains a significant barrier to protecting the needs of all IDPs across the country (UNHCR, 2022b).

Mexico. Deputy High Commissioner visits Mexico and Central America. © UNHCR/Jeoffrey Guillemard

3.2. INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION - "NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US"

Displaced populations possess knowledge and capacities critical to designing effective solutions. Displaced people are not passive victims. They have insights and experiences that can improve the very policies designed to protect them (see Box 8). This is why the active participation of displaced people in policy-making processes is so key: their unique perspectives and first-hand experiences can improve protection, disaster risk reduction and climate policies, ensuring they are able to better respond to the realities of displacement in the context of climate change impacts.

Displaced people are rarely given a seat at the table or supported in taking leadership positions in discussions and decisions on climate adaptation and mitigation. National priorities for climate action are set through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). However, affected communities are rarely invited to participate in the planning and design of these plans and strategies. Despite rhetorical agreement about the importance of participation, only approximately 35 per cent of the NAPs reported that they conducted consultations (Ober K. et al., 2023). Only 54 of 166 NDCs[11] submitted as of July 2024 mentioned forced displacement prompted by climate change, and only 25 of those contained concrete provisions that include commitments, objectives, or tangible actions on displacement in the context of climate change. Of the 60 NAPs submitted by states as of September 2024, 48 referred to forms of human mobility and 46 mentioned displacement in the context of climate change impacts. However, just 24 included provisions for forced displacement because of the impacts of climate change. Surprisingly, only three countries, Colombia, Timor-Leste, and Sri Lanka, made concrete provisions in both NAPs and NDCs. Overall, 159 NDCs and 48 NAPs fail to address concerns of pre-existing refugees and internally displaced people, and 91 per cent of all states do not explicitly consider cross-border displacement in their NDCs and NAPs. Furthermore, only 18 NDCs and 32 NAPs have concrete provisions for planned relocation and five NDCs and eight NAPs have plans for evacuation (OECD, 2023).[12]

Displaced people are often among those most exposed and vulnerable to multiple hazards, and for whom disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures are urgent (Yonetani, M., 2018). Emergency evacuations and planned relocation to safe settlement areas, as well as protection and durable solutions are some of the measures that can be used to reduce disaster risk for displaced communities (see Box 9) (UNHCR, 2023a).

Zimbabawe. Young refugee activist for climate and environment plants tree in Tongogara. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux

11. The European Union submitted one joint NDC for the 27 member states. The review included an overview of second and updated or adjusted NDCs up to 16th September 2024, also see SLYCAN Trust, (2024), Briefing note: Human mobility in National Adaptation Plans Update, SLYCAN Trust, 2024 and Huckstep, S., Dempster, H., Miller, S., (2023), Refugees are missing from National Adaptation Plans: Why this matters, and what to do about it, Center for Global Development, 2023. Figures referenced in the text were updated as of September 2024 based on own research of the authors.

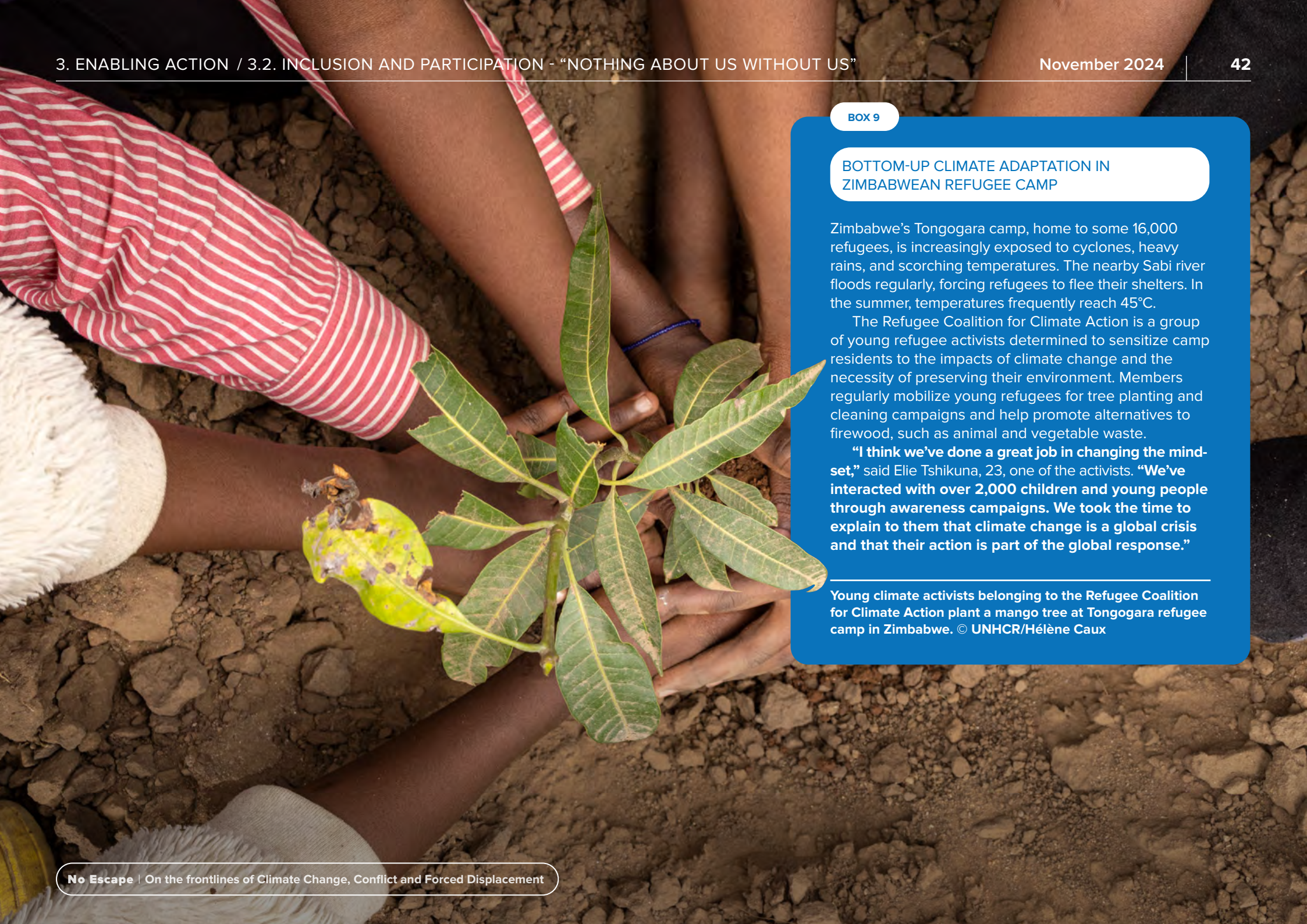
12. Figures referenced in the text were updated as of September 2024 based on the authors' research.

BOX 8

ROHINGYA YOUTH IN ACTION IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN BANGLADESH

Before Mohammed Anower and his friends got to work, the stream that ran past his family's shelter in Kutupalong refugee settlement was a fetid river of waste. In the monsoon rains, it quickly overflowed its banks, contributing to the flooding and landslides that devastate this sprawling camp, which lies in an area of Bangladesh prone to increasingly frequent and intense tropical storms. Anower belongs to one of dozens of youth groups across the camp that design and implement projects to combat pollution and raise awareness about climate change. They dredged the stream of waste and planted native trees and grasses along its banks. The results not only reduced flooding, but also created a cleaner and healthier environment and more public space. **"It's essential for refugees to come together on climate issues,"** said Anower. **"We all have to work collectively to mitigate the impact of climate change."**

Mohammed Anower, 18, a Rohingya refugee living in Bangladesh, is part of a youth group leading climate action in Kutupalong refugee camp.
© UNHCR/Susan Hopper



BOX 9

BOTTOM-UP CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN ZIMBABWEAN REFUGEE CAMP

Zimbabwe’s Tongogara camp, home to some 16,000 refugees, is increasingly exposed to cyclones, heavy rains, and scorching temperatures. The nearby Sabi river floods regularly, forcing refugees to flee their shelters. In the summer, temperatures frequently reach 45°C.

The Refugee Coalition for Climate Action is a group of young refugee activists determined to sensitize camp residents to the impacts of climate change and the necessity of preserving their environment. Members regularly mobilize young refugees for tree planting and cleaning campaigns and help promote alternatives to firewood, such as animal and vegetable waste.

“I think we’ve done a great job in changing the mind-set,” said Elie Tshikuna, 23, one of the activists. **“We’ve interacted with over 2,000 children and young people through awareness campaigns. We took the time to explain to them that climate change is a global crisis and that their action is part of the global response.”**

Young climate activists belonging to the Refugee Coalition for Climate Action plant a mango tree at Tongogara refugee camp in Zimbabwe. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux

There is widespread recognition of the need to include forcibly displaced people in disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies. At the global level, the Sendai Framework (2015) calls for the consideration of human mobility in DRR strategies and for the promotion of people-centred and rights-based approaches to DRR (UNISDR, 2015). The 2023 Political Declaration of the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework calls upon States to strengthen comprehensive disaster risk governance by promoting DRR policies, strategies and actions that reduce the risk of displacement in the context of disasters (UNGA, 2023; UNDRR, 2019). Furthermore, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), adopted in 2018, contain specific provisions on the need to include migrants, displaced people, and refugees in DRR strategies (UNGA, 2018a; 2018b). The importance of DRR is also recognised in the United Nations Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement which sets out the UN's commitment to achieving durable solutions to internal displacement (UN, 2022).

Even so, displaced populations are often excluded from DRR strategies and emergency preparedness measures, including early warning systems and anticipatory action. Only seven out of 31 regional DRR strategies and related instruments reference displacement and two-thirds of national DRR plans contain some reference to displacement, though often with little elaboration (UNDRR, UNHCR, 2024). This oversight not only compromises the effectiveness of these strategies but perpetuates the marginalization of forcibly displaced people. While much work has been done in the humanitarian sector on expanding anticipatory action approaches, limited work has focused specifically on displacement (Anticipation Hub, 2023).

Over time, without support, these vulnerable groups exhaust their assets and coping capabilities, leaving them more susceptible to hazardous events in future (UNDRR, 2024). While these dynamics are highly context-specific, they are exacerbated in fragile and conflict-affected settings where communities struggle to sustain resilient food, land, and water systems (ACCORD, 2023). Equally, in more stable contexts, programmes that promote equitable resource-sharing, decent work and social protection, and equal access to climate adaptation measures can support and enhance peaceful relations between displaced populations and host communities.

To truly address these challenges, community-driven action must be central to adaptation efforts. Building on local and traditional knowledge and empowering women is essential for creating solutions that are both sustainable and contextually appropriate. Displaced people often hold detailed knowledge about the environments from which they come. Engaging with this local expertise allows for more tailored and effective interventions that resonate with the lived realities of these communities. By fostering leadership within displaced populations and enabling them to co-create solutions, policies are not only more effective, but they also empower those directly affected, recognizing, and supporting their role as agents of change rather than considering them as passive beneficiaries.

Inclusive humanitarian efforts, climate action, and development strategies that engage both displaced people and host communities in decision-making can improve social cohesion and resilience. Participatory approaches, such as community-driven development, can foster positive interactions between groups and improve perceptions of one another, creating an environment where collective solutions can thrive (WB, 2022).

Adopting a systems approach to planning, which incorporates continuous monitoring and active involvement of displaced communities, offers a comprehensive pathway to address forced displacement (UNEP, IRP, 2023). This approach recognizes the complexity of displacement dynamics, integrating social, economic, and environmental factors into a cohesive framework. By fostering collaboration between displaced people, host communities, and stakeholders, a systems approach can create sustainable, long-term solutions that address the root causes of displacement while promoting resilience and self-sufficiency (see Box 10).

BOX 10

Ana was born and raised in the Chocó Department of Colombia's Pacific region, where the primary livelihood is agriculture and fishing. The region is known for its scenic rivers, beautiful coastlines along both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, and impenetrable, lush rainforests in one of the rainiest places on Earth. However, despite its beauty and natural resources, Chocó has historically suffered from poverty, underdevelopment, and persistent violence, due to at least five armed conflicts in the last decades.

Over the years, the presence of armed groups, guerrilla movements, drug cartels, and organized crime networks brutally disrupted civilian lives. In addition, acute climate events have become more extreme in recent years. Chocó's relentless rains have caused frequent and significant flooding and landslides that threaten lives and livelihoods. Living through both violence and climate extremes made Ana's life unbearable; she left her home and farm and moved to a neighbourhood called Bello Oriente in the outskirts of Medellín.

Bello Oriente is now home to many forcibly displaced people, who are building new lives alongside host communities, living in similar vulnerable conditions. Degraded land, high pollution, structural poverty, and limited livelihood opportunities contribute to increasing vulnerabilities and tensions among these diverse groups in a complex urban context where violence and armed conflicts still affect the population. To address this, UNHCR Colombia, supported by UNHCR's Environment and Climate Action Innovation Fund, piloted the introduction of peri-urban hydroponic and traditional community gardening to address both environmental and social challenges: the Bello Oriente Environment School was born.

Working at this school, Ana has found a new sense of belonging. In the community gardens, forcibly displaced people from across Colombia and Venezuela – men and women of all ages – can work together, learn from each other and exchange both intergenerational and ancestral knowledge about farming and cultivating organic vegetables. Through these activities, within the framework of the UNHCR strategy of protection and durable solutions in urban contexts, participants can ensure their livelihoods and food security, while helping to rehabilitate the environmental health of the valley, build social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in the process.

"I feel joy because I have the means to eat, to feed my family and to give food to the neighbours," Ana said. **"What I have achieved with the community and with my friends, I have felt very good about and happy because we have learnt from each other. I am proud of what I have achieved, and I feel ready to replicate these practices by passing the knowledge onto the youth."**

Ana at the Bello Oriente Environmental School, Medellin, Colombia. © UNHCR/Catalina Betancur Sánchez

3.3. INVESTMENT: INCLUSIVE FINANCE AND SUPPORT

There is a widening gap between the needs of displaced populations and their hosts and the financial resources available to meet those needs. Delays in the delivery of promised climate finance and support for vulnerable countries and communities are taking a growing toll. Humanitarian operations are witnessing the heartbreaking reality of displacement in the context of climate change and disasters worldwide, with projections for the overall loss and damage from climate change ranging from $290 billion to $580 billion per year. However, the resources needed to shore up resilience remain out of reach for displaced people on the frontlines of the climate crisis (UNHCR, 2022c).

Countries facing the harshest impacts of climate change – particularly those experiencing fragility or conflict – tend to receive the least climate finance. Currently, 90 per cent of climate finance targets middle-income, high emitting countries (Weathering Risks, 2024). This leaves forcibly displaced populations and their host communities less able to adapt to the growing challenges of climate change. Refugee-hosting countries show proof of tremendous efforts and solidarity in mobilizing often scarce resources to respond to the humanitarian needs of forcibly displaced populations – often without receiving the required external financial resources or support.

These trends are even more pronounced in countries suffering the impacts of both climate change and conflict. In 2021, three out of five forcibly displaced people were hosted in fragile contexts (OECD, 2022). Yet between 2014 and 2021, fragile states received just $10.8 per person annually in adaptation funding, with extremely fragile states receiving a mere $2.1 per person. By contrast, non-fragile states received an average of $161.7 per person. Without that support, the cycle of displacement and vulnerability will only continue (UNDP, 2021). Even within states, climate finance does not reach the most vulnerable populations. Less than 10 per cent of climate finance in fragile states leaves capital cities and it rarely reaches the local level (Mercy Corps, 2023). Between 2018-2022, 67 per cent of climate finance was allocated to countries with low levels of violence, according to Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), a data collection and mapping initiative. ACLED also reported that the higher the intensity of a conflict in a country, the less likely that country was to receive climate finance. Funding is often channelled to countries with high levels of capacity. Within unstable contexts, local and regional instability conditions can determine whether interventions are feasible. Funding at the state and local levels often goes to areas with more stable populations that experience less conflict and violence as opposed to the areas with the people most in need (Raleigh C. et al., 2024). Investing in climate finance for these communities is not just a matter of survival – it is about giving displaced people the chance to rebuild, become more resilient, and take control of their futures.

Pakistan. UNHCR's education initiatives in Balochistan July 2022.
© UNHCR/Mercury Transformations

BOX 11

ACCELERATING CLIMATE FINANCE, THE GREEN CLIMATE FUND'S PERSPECTIVE

Nowhere do we witness more vulnerability than in communities that have been hit by the interconnected threats of a rapidly changing climate and conflict. However, these communities are the ones that are the most often left behind.

Despite some progress in closing the gaps in climate change adaptation financing over the past decade, the available funding pool for fragile and conflict-affected settings is limited and the number of willing, risk-taking actors is even smaller. Multilateral development banks and a handful of bilateral donors account for the bulk of adaptation flows to these settings. Highly conflict-affected countries receive just $2 per capita of annual climate change adaptation funding.

The current trends described in this report call for more risk-taking investment in conflict-affected and fragile settings through public and private partnership and with the help of organizations that are present and operationally ready to deliver in hard-to-reach places. Our challenge is to increase access to available, affordable, and reliable financing to reach vulnerable communities and underserved countries. There is no other way to do this at scale and at pace than through inter-sectoral partnership and collaboration. We must increasingly provide collective, local solutions to both the growing climate crisis and rising incidences of violent conflict.

We need to work with organizations that are deeply embedded in local communities, operating through and with trusted networks to bring rapid relief and assistance where it is most needed. We must also build a better understanding of risks and opportunities and how we might increasingly address climate vulnerability and the underserved, to both prevent countries falling into climate-induced conflict and fragility, and to help affected communities build resilience.

The Green Climate Fund

Many low-income countries are exposed to climate change and prone to fragility due to insecurity and conflict. Yet adaptation programmes rarely integrate conflict prevention and peacebuilding objectives. If adaptation strategies are designed without considering conflict sensitivity, they can inadvertently reinforce existing conflict dynamics or create new ones (Mosello, B., 2020). Currently, countries that are at risk of climate-driven instability and conflict are insufficiently targeted by adaptation investments (Läderach, P., et al., 2021).

Refugee-led organizations struggle to access climate finance. Local ownership and leadership of stakeholders is essential to build effective climate change adaptation programmes. Yet the often complex reporting requirements from donors and a high degree of risk aversion can make it difficult for refugee-led organizations to find funding. This can leave displaced people stranded without the support to build their resilience in ways that prioritize their own needs and experiences.

By taking the risk of investing in fragile contexts, and on a no-regrets basis, fewer of those most in need would be left behind. Adaptation programmes that target populations affected by the impacts of climate change and conflict are sorely needed. However, the fear of working in an unstable situation often keeps donors away. Adopting conflict sensitive and peace responsive approaches to climate action and developing a contextual understanding through participatory and inclusive processes can help to build and implement more successful climate change adaptation programmes as well as remain agile and resilient in the face of ever-changing conflict dynamics through adaptive management.

UNHCR has championed the creativity of forcibly displaced and stateless communities through its Refugee-Led Innovation Fund. This offers up to $45,000 in direct funding for innovative projects designed and implemented by organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, alongside mentorship, peer support, and technical assistance as the success story in the below box illustrates (see Box 12).

Kenya. Solidarity Initiative for Refugees (SIR) is a local community-based organisation established in 2016 by a group of young refugees with the goal of using technology to equip refugees in Kakuma with the skills and tools to create a better future for themselves.
© UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

BOX 12

SEEDS OF INNOVATION: PIONEERING CLIMATE FINANCE FOR REFUGEE-LED ACTION

The Unidos Social Innovation Centre is a refugee-led organization working to build resilience and self-reliance in Uganda's Nakivale refugee settlement. In 2023, it successfully applied to UNHCR's Refugee-led Innovation Fund, which is dedicated to fostering projects led by forcibly displaced communities. Their project on regenerative agriculture has helped to transform the lives of displaced people battling food insecurity exacerbated by the worsening impacts of climate change. This project addressed low agricultural yields and soil infertility by training farmers in sustainable practices.

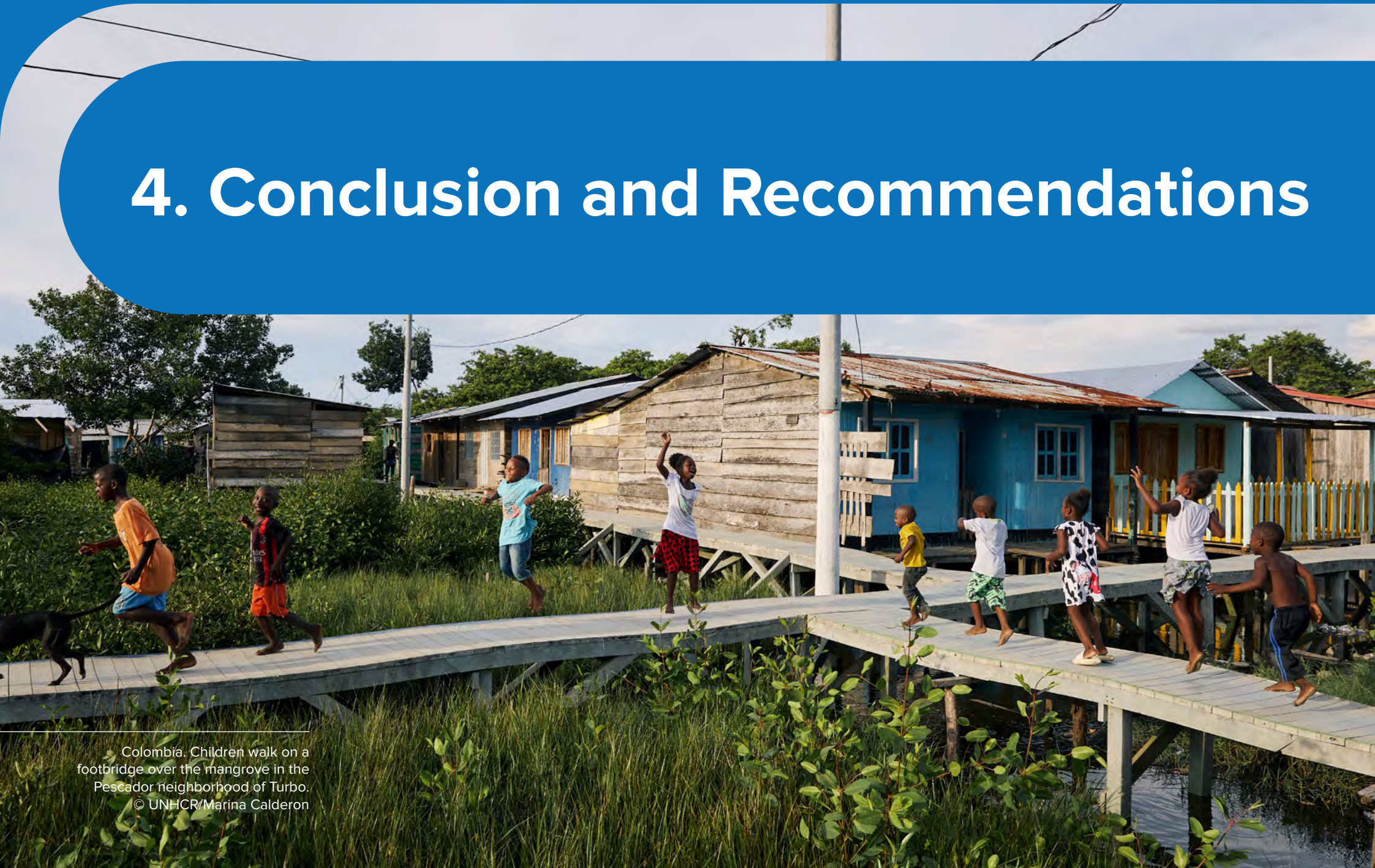
Throughout their project, Unidos has embraced a refugee-led approach that emphasizes empowerment and hands-on work. Training sessions on soil regeneration techniques have created significant enthusiasm among participants, with many reporting increased yields and improved soil health.

James, a refugee farmer in the Nakivale settlement, struggled with declining crop yields due to soil infertility. After attending the Unidos training, he used the techniques he learned, such as crop rotation, composting, and the use of organic fertilizers. In one planting season, James saw a significant improvement in his yields, allowing him to produce enough food to feed his family and sell the surplus. His success inspired other farmers in his community to adopt similar practices, creating a ripple effect that enhances food security and economic stability for many families.

Finally, the Unidos project also involves local production of organic fertilizers to ensure availability of soil enhancers throughout the community. A vermicomposting site in Nakivale led by 10 refugee women has produced high-quality organic fertilizers being distributed to more than 100 farmers. The initiative not only improves agricultural productivity but reduces waste. As a bonus, the women leading the project have gained valuable leadership and management skills, boosting their standing within the community. Projects like these underscores the importance of investing in innovative, community-led solutions to address pressing challenges in refugee settlements.

Pine seedlings at Gulu Nursery managed by National Forestry Authority (NFA).
©UNHCR/ Geunhye Kim

4. Conclusion and Recommendations



Colombia. Children walk on a footbridge over the mangrove in the Pescador neighborhood of Turbo.
© UNHCR/Marina Calderon

Chad. Fresh Sudanese refugee displacement from Sudan.
© UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

The impacts of climate change are making life harder, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations, by disproportionately impacting the safety, security and well-being of people living in displacement and their host communities. Furthermore, climate change can interact with or contribute to drivers of displacement, with the risk that people may be displaced across borders and require international protection.

Climate change is increasing the challenges displaced people face in securing safe places to settle and call home, and thereby increasing the risk of protracted, recurrent, and onward movement. This also compromises durable solutions and opportunities for return or reintegration. In those contexts, with resources already scarce, social cohesion can be threatened and the needs of host communities can also grow. To preserve and reinforce the protection space and equitable access to essential services, refugee-hosting countries need new and additional support. This is not just a question of investing in adaptation and resilience, but in mitigating future insecurity and securing peace.

The data and stories presented in this report demonstrate the complex interplay between the effects of climate change, conflict, and displacement. This underscores the critical need for integrated approaches that are climate-smart, protection-centred, human rights-based and conflict-sensitive. The need to apply existing refugee instruments, and advocate for international solidarity and climate justice for forcibly displaced people and all those living in fragile and conflict-affected areas has never been greater. The risks posed to these populations are growing by the day and the window of opportunity to act is narrow, but sustainable solutions are within reach. We call on government leaders and donors to consider the below calls to action:

1

PROTECT

displaced people fleeing in the context of climate change impacts and disasters by applying and adapting existing legal tools.

- **Ensure that international refugee and human rights law, International Humanitarian Law and regional mechanisms apply** when the need for international protection arises in cases of displacement in the context of climate change impacts and disasters, including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- **Explore how national and local policy frameworks** that address climate change, including National Adaptation Plans and National Development Plans, **can incorporate provisions for the protection of displaced people** into their approach and implementation, drawing on the Global Compact on Refugees.

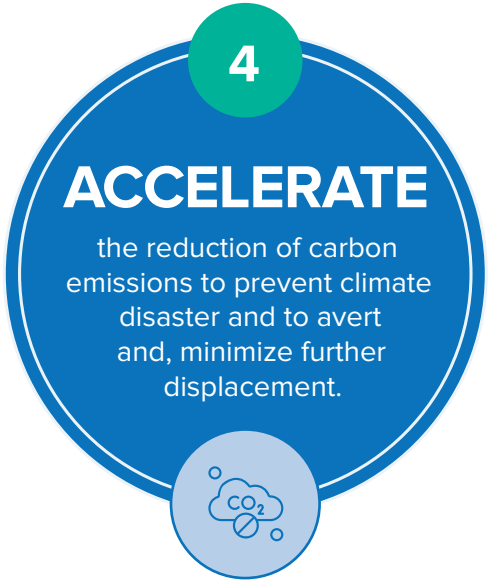
2

INCLUDE

the voices and specific needs of displaced populations and host communities in climate finance and policy decisions.

- **Recognize displacement and the protection of displaced people** who are also in highly climate vulnerable situations in COP29 decisions and commitments, and in national legal and policy frameworks supporting climate action.
- **Enable highly vulnerable countries and communities on the climate frontlines to meaningfully participate** in policy discussions, recognizing the capabilities and leadership they bring as critical to inclusive solutions.
- **Support host countries to include refugees and IDPs in their climate action policies** and plans as a basis for funding national priorities, including National Adaptation Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions, Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and Early Warning Systems.

- **Ensure that there are funding windows and mechanisms available to address the devastation** already being caused by climate impacts and faced by forcibly displaced people and the communities that host them, including but not limited to, the Fund for Responding to Loss & Damage.
- Mobilize technical assistance and institutional capacity to **enable readiness to absorb, access and implement climate action finance**, and ensure accountability to refugees, host countries and local communities.
- Ensure a greater proportion of **climate-sensitive and peace-responsive climate finance reaches those living on the frontlines of the climate crisis**, especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas – including refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and their hosts. Thereby supporting their adaptation, preparedness, early warning, and responses to reduce suffering, strengthen their resilience and fully leveraging the co-benefits of climate action for peace, and peace for climate resilient solutions.
- **Encourage funds and donors to adopt a higher risk tolerance in fragile and conflict-affected settings**, proportionate to the urgent needs of populations being left behind.



- **Renew national and private sector commitments to rapidly phase out dependence on fossil fuels** and make deep, urgent cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to slow the pace of climate change and avoid the worst-case scenarios for current and future generations.
- **Support a just transition to provide vulnerable communities with sustainable economic alternatives.** By ensuring equitable access to green jobs, resources, and social protections, displaced and host communities can better adapt to climate change, thus preventing further displacement.

GLOSSARY

Adaptation
'In human systems, the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects; human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects (IPCC, 2022).'

Adaptive capacity
'The ability of systems, institutions, humans and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities or to respond to consequences.' (IPCC, 2022).

Climate change
'A change in the state of the climate that can be identified (such as by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forces such as modulations of the solar cycles, volcanic eruptions, and persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or land use.' (IPCC, 2021).

Displacement
The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-induced disasters. This may refer to forced movements within a country (internal displacement) or across international borders (cross border displacement) (Adapted from UNHCR, 1998).

Disaster
'A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability, and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic, and environmental losses and impacts.' (UNGA, 2015).

Disaster Risk Reduction
Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new, reducing existing disaster risk, and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development. Disaster risk reduction strategies and policies define goals and objectives across different timescales and with concrete targets, indicators, and time frames. In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, these should be aimed at preventing the creation of disaster risk, the reduction of existing risk and the strengthening of economic, social, health and environmental resilience. A global, agreed policy of disaster risk reduction is set out in the United Nations endorsed Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, adopted in March 2015, whose expected outcome over the next 15 years is: "The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries" (UNDRR, ND).

Environmental change
'Changes in the physical and biogeochemical environment, over a large scale, either caused naturally or influenced by human activities (Foresight, 2011).' Environmental change includes both environmental degradation and climate change.

Environmental degradation
'The reduction of the capacity of the environment to meet social and ecological objectives and needs … Degradation of the environment can alter the frequency and intensity of natural hazards and increase the vulnerability of communities. The types of human-induced degradation are varied and include land misuse, soil erosion and loss, desertification, wildland fires, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, mangrove destruction, land, water and air pollution, climate change, sea level rise and ozone depletion (UNISDR, 2009).'

Exposure
'The presence of people; livelihoods; species or ecosystems; environmental functions, services, and resources; infrastructure; or economic, social, or cultural assets in places and settings that could be adversely affected.' (IPCC, 2022)

Extreme weather event
'An event that is rare at a particular place and time of year. Definitions of "rare" vary, but an extreme weather event would normally be as rare as or rarer than the 10th or 90th percentile of a probability density function estimated from observations.' (IPCC, 2022).

Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS)
Defined by the World Bank as countries with high levels of institutional and social fragility, identified based on indicators that measure the quality of policy and institutions, and manifestations of fragility – or countries affected by violent conflict, identified based on a threshold number of conflict-related deaths relative to the population. (WB, 2024).

Hazard
'The potential occurrence of a natural or human-induced physical event or trend that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, as well as damage and loss to property, infrastructure, livelihoods, service provision, ecosystems and environmental resources (IPCC, 2022).'

Human Mobility
An umbrella term referring to various forms of population movement, including displacement, migration and planned relocation (UNHCR, 2023c).

Internally displaced persons
Described in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as 'Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-induced disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.' (UNHCR, 1998).

Loss and Damage
Loss and damage refers to the negative effects of climate change that occur despite mitigation and adaptation efforts. (UNDP, not dated).

National Adaptation Plan (NAP)
The NAP process was established under the UNFCCC Cancun Adaptation Framework (CAF). It enables least developed countries to formulate and implement national adaptation plans, building upon their experience in preparing and implementing national adaptation programmes of action, as a means of identifying medium and long-term adaptation needs and developing and implementing strategies and programmes to address those needs. (UNFCCC, NDa).

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
The NDCs represent the commitment of Parties to the Paris Agreement for the reduction of national greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. The Paris Agreement (Article 4, paragraph 2) requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve. (UNFCCC, NDb).

Protection
All activities aimed at achieving full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. Protection involves creating an environment conducive to respect for human beings, preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring dignified conditions of life through reparation, restitution, and rehabilitation. (UNHCR, 2023c).

Refugee
According to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, refugee applies to any person who, 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country' (Source: UNGA, 1951). Within wider regional definitions – under the 1969 OAU Convention Relating to the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, or the 1984 Cartagena Declaration – refugees encompass people who are compelled to leave their countries in the context of events or circumstances linked to climate change impacts or disasters 'seriously disturbing public order'. The need for international protection arises because they are unable to avail themselves of the protection of their own country against these threats. (UNHCR, 2023c).

Resilience
The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions. (UNISDR, 2009).

Stateless person
A person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law, either because they never had a nationality, or because they lost it without acquiring a new one (see UNGA 1954). Note: the vulnerability and potential "disappearance" of small island states due to sea level rise will not inevitably lead to statelessness, and the greatest risks of statelessness in the context of climate change are related rather to the significant number of people displaced in the context of climate change related disasters. (UNHCR, NRC, Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness 2021).

Sudden-onset events
'include hydrometeorological hazards, such as flooding, windstorms or mudslides and geophysical hazards including earthquakes, tsunamis or volcanic eruptions (UNISDR, 2009).'

Slow-onset events
'include "sea level rise, increasing temperatures, ocean acidification, glacial retreat and related impacts, salinization, land and forest degradation, loss of biodiversity and desertification" (UNFCCC, 2010 and UNISDR, 2009).'

Vulnerability
Refers to the propensity of exposed elements such as human beings, their livelihoods, and assets to suffer adverse effects when impacted by hazard events. Vulnerability is related to predisposition, susceptibilities, fragilities, weaknesses, deficiencies, or lack of capacities that favour adverse effects on the exposed elements. (IPCC 2022).

Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data
CIMA	Centro Internazionale in Monitoraggio Ambientale, or the International Centre for Environmental Monitoring
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
DGAP	German Council on Foreign Relations
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FCV	Fragile, conflict-affected, and vulnerable settings
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IOM-DTM	IOM - Displacement Tracking Matrix
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NAP	National Adaptation Plans
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOSAT	United Nations Satellite Centre

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Cover image
South Sudan. Years of flooding leaves thousands permanently displaced in Bentiu. A road protected by dikes cuts through floodwater that stretches all the way to the horizon, near Bentiu.

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