

# European Humanitarian Forum

## Forum humanitaire européen



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## European Humanitarian Forum – Field Consultation

### *FACTORING IN THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN ASIA PACIFIC*

ECHO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific - Bangkok

November the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### **I. Overview:**

The regional consultation ‘Factoring in the consequences of Climate Change in humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific’ was held on 16 November 2021. Co-hosted by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the DG ECHO Regional Office in Bangkok, this lively web-based discussion was attended by 61 people (50 external and 11 DG ECHO staff) representing about 26 organization. Key DG ECHO Partners (UN, IOs, INGOs) as well as representatives from civil society, academia, the donor community participated. Notably, the French Embassy to Thailand, the EU Delegation in India and the World Bank (GFDRR) were represented. The DG ECHO Country Offices of Bangladesh, and the Philippines Antenna were additionally in attendance.

Outreach of the event was broader when considering that over 70 people (62 external) representing 36 organizations enrolled themselves ahead of the event. The plenary session focused on harnessing views, asks and recommendations on how to tackle the growing impact of climate change and environmental degradation and adapt accordingly humanitarian action. Participants reflected in plenary about challenges and opportunities posed by the increasingly complex risk landscape to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and shared their recommendations for the EHF.

#### **Questions discussed:**

- Is the current humanitarian (including early warning) system in the region, able to inform acting early and responding effectively and efficiently to the compounding impacts of climate change?
- How do we ensure affected populations remain at the center of our collective humanitarian action?
- What challenges face the humanitarian system?
- How can we adapt the humanitarian system to the increasing impact of climate change? Are any opportunities present? Which are key areas to prioritize?
- Are there any best practices which have emerged/is emerging in Asia-Pacific which could be relevant to other geographical contexts?
- What are the top (3-5) key recommendations and asks?

## II. Key Issues emerged

### The current humanitarian system is not fit to address the impact of climate change on (escalating) humanitarian need

All 20 participants who responded to the Mentimeter question “Is the current humanitarian system suited to deal with the affects of climate change” responded ‘no’ or ‘not sure’ (13- No; 7 Not sure).

While it was acknowledged that changes and progress are being made, inadequate analysis of how climate change impacts risk, vulnerability, target populations, and the asynchronous interaction between development/humanitarian/resilience systems, means that the sector is not currently able to meet the humanitarian needs resulting from unmitigated climate change and environmental degradation.

### Change in the risk landscape

The risk landscape in the Asia Pacific is changing. We are often dealing with multiple, simultaneous, cascading hazards and (compound) risks which our systems and government are not adequately prepared for. Climate change amplifies risk and vulnerability as it combines with other drivers of crisis such as poverty, insecurity, discrimination and conflict. Particular attention needs to be paid on conflict-affected population who likely display the least adaptive capacity to impacts of climate change. Collectively, much more needs to be done within the humanitarian circle and more broadly with other stakeholders, to unpack and clearly understand how conflict and climate change interact.

The immediate consequences of these complex risks can include system breakdowns and reversal of development gains. The humanitarian system alone cannot address these needs and consequently, there is a need to engage in a more meaningful triple nexus approach analysis and approach.

### Disaster Displacement

Climate change impacts mobility flows. For many of those who are internally displaced in the region, the nature of the displacement is cyclical and seasonal, posing new challenge to both themselves and the humanitarian community. Many are also in urban areas and move for a multitude of reasons, seeking livelihoods, improved access to services. Understanding the underlying causes and drivers of mobility is key to identifying adequate solutions and partnerships.

### Need for better coordination and harmonization across the triple nexus

The discussion of climate change has long been on the agenda however it was noted that conversations often happen on multiple platforms, in parallel and rarely joined up. Whilst the widespread interest to tackle the issue is welcomed, however the differences in how the discussions, funding mechanisms, policies etcetera can make it more challenging to collaborate in a way that best meets the needs of affected populations remains an unaddressed challenge.

### III. Key Recommendations to the EHF *(From discussion and Mentimeter results)*

#### 1. Invest in comprehensive risk analysis and building the evidence base

The changing risk landscape requires a more integrated approach which can account for intersections between various drivers and how this impact vulnerabilities and risks within communities, including displacement. This analysis can serve as a basis for improved resilience, mitigation and humanitarian assistance, and should be better integrated into the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. Within programming, these risk assessments need to be resourced as well as the evaluation of programs to better understand how they contribute to reducing need and impact of climate change is. Both represent an area where there is currently less data available than desirable and needed.

Analysis of medium long-term impacts of climate change by sectors is essential for identifying what actions need to be taken in the present to reduce future impact. Communities and other local actors play a crucial role in analysis of the risk, vulnerabilities and potential actions and should be valued equally to the investments in science and technology.

#### 2. Centering communities in climate response

Interventions which co-create with communities at all stages from risk analysis to program design and implementation are essential for effective action against climate change. These program approaches should be promoted and highlighted.

Vulnerability and contributions vary across contexts. A gender and inclusion lens should be mainstreamed across climate action.

#### 3. Balance financing on climate action, and better coherence and connectivity of financing

Access to climate financing and funding for humanitarian action poses very different requirements, objectives, and indicators of impact which need to be better appreciated. Greater coherence of climate, disaster risk, and humanitarian financing mechanisms is needed to effectively address the impacts of CC.

Climate finance should be more evenly allocated between mitigation and adaptation efforts. Adaptation is critical to effective climate action in many places affected by conflict, yet it remains underfunded and deprioritized.

A greater proportion of climate finance must reach communities affected by conflict and violence. There is a gap between stable countries and fragile ones in their ability to access funding and their capacity to design and implement relevant programs. Efforts to close this gap are critical.

#### 4. Strengthen investment in understanding displacement and enable mobility as a climate adaptation strategy

Greater investment into reducing disaster displacement and understanding human mobility should be integrated into climate adaptation and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) frameworks.

Legal and policy frameworks should be developed so to enable people to stay in their homes, when this is what they desire; move elsewhere, before disaster strikes; receive protection if they are displaced; and have their rights and dignity respected at all times.

For migration to be a form of adaptation to climate change, states should proactively develop safe migration pathways and appreciate the multiple benefits they can generate. For instance, seasonal and long-term migration can enable families to diversify their livelihoods and broaden their networks for financial security, while simultaneously alleviating demographic and resource pressures at home. In doing so, they can enhance the resilience of those who move, as well as those who stay behind.

5. Invest in greening humanitarian operations

National policies need to be harmonized in countries to promote green humanitarian action.

Purchase carbon credit offsets certificates for emissions linked to humanitarian and development initiatives. However, entities should look at ways to reduce humanitarian footprint as a first step before purchasing further credits.

Invest in promoting resilient infrastructure amongst essential services and new development in collaboration with private sector and government partners should be more systematically explored.

6. Reduce silos and improve connections between development, peace and humanitarian communities of practice

As stressed in instruments such as the Nansen Initiative's Protection Agenda, a 'toolkit' of responses is needed to address the impact of climate change on humanitarian action – this is including DRM, DP/DRR, climate adaptation, humanitarian assistance, migration opportunities and planned relocations. These actions should be connected and streamlined for greater efficiency – e.g. risk analysis.

States to support improved collaboration between ministries and institutions to ensure more comprehensive and wholistic approaches to reduce the humanitarian needs associated with unmitigated climate change and environmental degradation.

Initiatives such as anticipatory action are positive steps towards mitigating climate related disasters but must be supplemented and complemented by longer-term resilience and DP/DRM/DRR activities to avoid the same expenditure annually on anticipatory action.

7. Document and amplify existing good practices

The space created to discuss this issue and share practices was greatly appreciated by Partners. Continued support for documenting and sharing good practices in tackling climate change is needed.

#### **IV. Key enablers identified for further reflection by the EHF**

##### The Climate and Environment Charter for humanitarian actors and DG ECHO Minimum Environmental Requirements

The 'Charter' and DG ECHO's guidance are good tools for catalyzing commitment and action to addressing the impact on climate action in humanitarian action. These tools are an opportunity to further operationalize and mobilise actions amongst states and humanitarian and development partners. DG ECHO's minimum environmental requirements and recommendations roll out, should likely support the operational element in greening humanitarian action.

### The Asia-Pacific Disaster Displacement Working Group

This platform represents a developing example of multi-stakeholder engagement and cooperation leading to research and publications about reducing risks and addressing disaster displacement, harnessing regional learning and practices.

### The Sendai Framework

The mid-term review of the Sendai framework will happen in 2023. This is an opportunity not only to track progress but assess which actions need to be prioritized. The framework highlights key issues such displacement and resilient infrastructure. This instrument, which most countries have committed to, can be leveraged to advance climate action.

### International Humanitarian Law

If respected, IHL protects the natural environment and prevents the deeply interlinked civilian harm that accompanies environmental damage in armed conflict. States need to ensure that IHL is and remains respected as part of their response to climate change.

### Youth

The role of youth in leading on climate action is well recognised globally. Participants highlighted the important role they have played in various responses in the region and in communicating risk with communities. As a key part of the affected populations as well as leaders in their communities, they are an essential demographic to engage with to addressing the impacts of climate change.

## **V. Resources shared during the webinar:**

- [Adapting humanitarian action to the effects of climate change: An ALNAP Lessons Paper](#)
- [Asia Pacific Disaster Displacement Working Group- reducing protracted and multiple disasters](#)
- [EU Communication on humanitarian action: New actions, same challenges](#)
- [Checklist on disaster displacement](#)
- [Climate and Environment Charter](#)
- [ICVA learning Stream on Climate Change](#)
- [UNOPS resilience Pathways Model](#)
- [Reimagining Climate Education and Youth Leadership](#)