



A landslide in Itogon, Benguet, triggered by Super Typhoon Mangkhut, left 35 people dead and 68 missing. © JC Borlongan / IOM 2018

## The Asia-Pacific Context

Asia and the Pacific is home to over 4.3 billion people, covering approximately 60 per cent of the world's population. The region comprises small island States in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean; archipelagos such as Indonesia and the Philippines; arid countries like Mongolia and the Islamic Republic of Iran; mountainous and landlocked countries spanning the Hindukush-Himalayan ranges such as Nepal and Bhutan; and large river basins and deltas of the Yangtze, Mekong, and Brahmaputra, covering China, India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.

As a function of its size, population and topographical diversity, the region is highly exposed to climate change and natural hazards. Though difficult to generalize across the Asia-Pacific region, frequently occurring sudden-onset disasters such as floods, tropical cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis and others, some of which are aggravated by climate change, have significant impacts on national GDP as countries incur significant losses and fatalities, particularly when the disasters are at their most intense. Slow-onset processes including sea-level rise, coastal erosion, ocean acidification and droughts,

along with climatic changes linked to precipitation and temperature patterns also have tangible impacts, though these are harder to measure.

The effect of climate change and disasters on human mobility is equally significant. Between 2008 and 2017, more than 198.1 million people were displaced by sudden-onset disasters in Asia and the Pacific— accounting for approximately 81 per cent of all disaster displacement in the world. Over 95 per cent of this displacement occurs due to climate and weather-related sudden-onset disasters such as storms and floods. Countries from the region, such as China, India and the Philippines routinely feature on the list of countries with the highest disaster displacement in absolute numbers.

On the other hand, countries with highest relative average annual displacement are small islands, including three (Palau, Vanuatu and Tonga) from the Pacific region. Slow-onset processes accelerated by climate change combine with other economic, social and political factors to produce human mobility, which may occur either preemptively or in response to progressively deteriorating environmental conditions, within a country or across

national borders. Others still may be unable to move due to a lack of resources and capacities, effectively becoming trapped in vulnerable situations.

Recent reports show that over the past two decades, many countries in Asia and the Pacific have strengthened their resilience against natural hazards. Although an estimated 6.9 billion people in the region have been impacted by natural hazards over the past 50 years, fewer people are dying because of these hazards as countries have devised more robust systems of early warning and responsive protection. But there is still a lot

to be done, and it is expected that hazards and disasters, fueled by a variety of risk factors, including climate change, environmental degradation, conflicts, population growth and unplanned and rapid urbanization, will continue to displace large numbers of people within their countries of origin, and compel more and more people to migrate, often irregularly, across borders. Disaster-related population movements will, therefore, have significant humanitarian and development implications for governments, societies and communities during the years to come.

## IOM's approach

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is well positioned to identify and implement solutions to these increasingly grave threats to life, livelihoods, property and infrastructure. Between 2020-2021, IOM's global programming on climate change and risk reduction served over 6.2 million people and trained over 85,000 community members, 7,000 government officials and 3,000 civil society representatives.

IOM's Migration, Environment, Climate Change and Risk Reduction activities reinforce local and national initiatives to prevent and prepare for disasters and related population movements, provide emergency assistance and protection where displacement cannot be avoided, and foster post-disaster recovery solutions and resilience-building. IOM's extensive field presence means that our work on climate change adaptation and risk reduction is fueled through strong partnerships with communities. Indigenous knowledge, techniques and resources are central to IOM's community centered and participatory programming.

Overall, IOM's DRR-CCA work supports States to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 which, along with the Paris Agreement, contains vital targets that contribute towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IOM delivers its DRR-CCA activities in line with the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience and in close cooperation with the United Nations and local and national partners. The significance of disasters, environmental degradation and climate change in shaping and driving population movements has been reflected in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which calls on States to reduce risks that trigger mobility and include migrants in disaster risk management efforts.

In line with the IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021-2030, the Organization pursues three broad objectives in managing environmental migration, intervening at each stage of the migration cycle:

1

### **Solution for people to move**

Managing migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters due to natural hazards.

2

### **Solutions for people on the move**

Assisting and protecting migrants and displaced persons in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters due to natural hazards.

3

### **Solutions for people to stay**

Making migration a choice by building resilience and addressing the adverse climatic and environmental drivers that compel people to move.



Reflecting the priorities of the Sendai Framework, IOM activities are organised under five thematic pillars of work:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Disaster prevention    |  Building back safer in recovery and reconstruction |
|  Disaster preparedness  |  Partnerships for resilience                        |
|  Risk-informed response |  |

IOM's risk reduction activities also link closely with other work related to emergency preparedness, humanitarian assistance following disasters, post-disaster recovery, in particular as it relates to internal displacement. For example, IOM works extensively in support of governments and communities to:

- Enhance disaster preparedness measures in vulnerable locations, looking at evacuation management, early warning systems, physical risk mitigation, community-based disaster risk reduction capacities and related activities and
- Integrate disaster risk reduction into recovery and reconstruction programming, related to shelter and housing support following disasters, support in the construction of disaster-resilient infrastructure and livelihoods, and approaches to increase resilience and reduce the likelihood of future disasters.

Much of this work is supported by the implementation of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which gathers and analyzes data to disseminate critical multi layered information on the mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of displaced and mobile populations. This enables decision makers and responders to provide these populations with more context specific assistance. The DTM is one of the world's largest repositories of displacement data and under IOM's newly launched Global Data Institute, expands its work on climate change and early warning related data collection, analysis, modelling and increasingly forecasting.





IOM Engagements have included:

**Bangladesh:** IOM supports efforts to strengthen disaster risk reduction and management in Rohingya Refugee camps through capacity building and infrastructure related interventions that contribute to prevention and mitigation.

**Nepal:** IOM provides support to the Government of Nepal in disaster governance, coordination, and capacity building to fulfil commitments in accordance to Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Plan of Action 2018-2030.

**Papua New Guinea:** IOM supports disaster risk reduction and climate resilience building efforts of communities in highlands and coaster areas exposed to earthquake, landslides, cyclones, and coastal flood

**Vanuatu:** IOM supports the Government of Vanuatu to implement key recovery priorities related to disaster preparedness and prevention efforts in accordance to the Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020-2023, contributing to the protection and resilience of people at risk of displacement in Vanuatu.

**Solomon Islands:** IOM has supported the development of national Planned Relocation Guidelines, which set out requirements for people-centred, participatory and inclusive dialogue and decision-making at all stages of possible planned relocation.

**Philippines:** IOM is implementing a range of early action interventions, working closely with OCHA and other agencies as part of an Anticipatory Action framework. It is also supporting response efforts to major emergencies in the country, including through the rollout of its DTM.



Bhola slum, Dhaka, started to be built by migrants affected by river erosion, many of them lost their land to the river. Nowadays the population of the slum is a mixture of economical and climate change migrants. © Amanda Nero / IOM



## Partnerships

IOM works closely with governments, UN agencies, academic institutions and civil society partners to implement DRR-CCA activities at the regional, subregional and national levels. At the national level, IOM projects in Asia and the Pacific are carried out in close coordination with relevant ministries, including Ministries of Environment, Climate Change and/or National Disaster Management Authorities.

At the same time, to strengthen regional and multi-country partnerships and coordination, IOM engages with governments via regional forums such as the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and is also co-lead of the Asia Pacific Disasters and Displacement (DDWG) working group alongside UNDRR. IOM also partners with several UN agencies to implement MECC activities and projects, including UN Environment (UNEP), International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP).

IOM is a part of the CADRI Partnership, a global partnership composed of 20 humanitarian and development organizations designed to provide a unique facility for countries to access expertise in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. In the Asia-Pacific region, IOM is contributing to CADRI missions in Timor Leste and the Maldives. IOM is also supporting the creation of a case study report through the WMO-UNDRR-led Center of Excellence. This effort will bring together UNDRR-WFP-UNDP-FAO-IOM-UNHCR to showcase ongoing programming efforts in fragile contexts that speak to climate adaptation and resilience building at the community level.

Our collaboration extends to intergovernmental organizations and platforms like the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD); academic partnerships with partners such as the Australian National University, TransRe and the Graduate Institute and civil society organizations. Existing partners, along with new partnerships, will continue to be critical in achieving the outcomes identified in IOM's approach in the region.



Residents in the Jon Knes 'floating village' in Cambodia make their houses adapt to the water levels over the year. © Muse Mohammed/IOM