

Development Approaches to Migration and Displacement in Asia and the Pacific

POLICY BRIEF



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Resilient nations.*



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UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

Summary

Migration and displacement are significant and complex development challenges that require a multi-faceted and multi-stakeholder response. Of the 258 million international migrants in 2017, 106 million were from Asia, remitting \$256 billion to their home countries. Further, the number of those displaced globally has increased to 68.5 million due to conflicts, climate change, and disasters induced by natural hazards, many of which have occurred in Asia and the Pacific.

UNDP has been working on migration and displacement for decades, addressing both the positive and negative impacts of population movements. The phenomena intersect with governance and human rights, from international to local levels; livelihoods and inclusive growth, often as drivers of migration; rule of law and access to justice, with migrants frequently excluded; urbanization, which has increased internal and international migration; climate, disasters, conflict and violent extremism, having resulted in displacement; and sustaining peace. They are about inequality and discrimination – people move to better opportunities, which can paradoxically exacerbate inequalities when not managed; about youth – the demographic most likely to migrate for work; and about gender – migration and employment opportunities, as well as vulnerabilities and resilience to displacement events, are often differentiated by gender.

In Asia and the Pacific, **UNDP applies a holistic development approach** to migration and displacement, promoting the benefits and mitigating the challenges. As such, we:



work towards ensuring **migration is a choice** rather than a necessity, supporting alternatives where needed, and developing early warning systems and mitigation to displacement events;



help empower migrants and host communities, facilitating integration and **social cohesion**;



strengthen channels for migrants and diaspora communities within and from the region to contribute to **sustainable development** in their home countries;



build the **resilience** of migrants and displaced persons to various vulnerabilities, including trafficking in persons; and



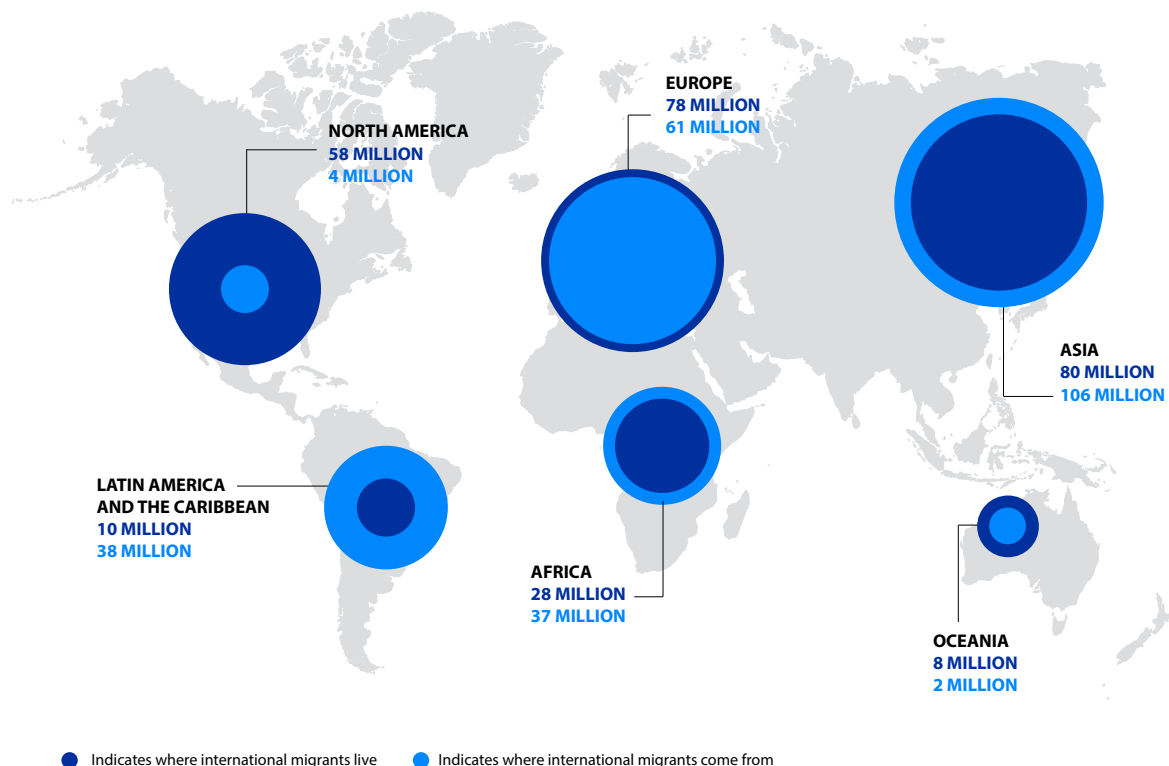
support the **re/integration** of migrants and displaced persons, helping to develop a range of services tailored to their needs.

In doing so, UNDP will support multi-stakeholder partnerships, engaging relevant actors in improving development outcomes of these issues in support of Agenda 2030. **Human mobility is a key factor in the SDG's** and to 'leave no one behind' and 'to reach the furthest behind first' requires that migrants and displaced populations be prioritized. The Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants further elaborate the political will to catalyse efforts specifically for migrants and those displaced.

The Global Context

Migration and displacement have become global megatrends, significantly affecting economic and social development. Estimates indicate that **258 million people now reside outside of their country of birth, which has tripled in the past 50 years**¹. Within that, the number of those displaced from their home communities has also increased to 68.5 million in 2017 due to conflict, disasters and climate change².

Figure 1: Number of international migrants in 2017³



The drivers of migration and root causes of displacement are often complex, resulting from social, economic, political and cultural factors. Demographic transitions and trends through industrialisation, urbanisation and development have provided impetus and demand for migration in countries around the world⁴. The ageing population represents a global and irreversible trend, with those aged 60 years or over projected to double from 962 million today to 2.1 billion in 2050⁵. As people move to meet labour market demands resulting from these dynamics, specific individual, family, and community characteristics contribute to their resilience or vulnerability in the migration experiences.

Analysis of migration has tended to focus on international migration, yet internal migration is a more significant phenomenon, both in terms of scale and development impact. Whilst more

1 UNDESA: *2017 International Migration Report* (New York, 2017).

2 UN News: [‘Nearly three million more displaced year-on-year, warns refugee agency chief, but solutions are within reach’](#) UN News (New York, 19 June 2018).

3 UNDESA: *International migrant stock: The 2017 revision* (New York, 2017).

4 R. Skeldon: *Migration, Urbanisation and Development* (New York, 2008).

5 UNDESA: *2017 Revision of World Population Prospects* (New York, 2017).



analysis is required on the interconnections, it is observed that ‘international migration is linked to internal migration and internal migration is linked to international migration in complex, ever-changing and evolving patterns of human movement’⁶. International migration is generally seen to be more heterogeneous than internal migration, although the socio-economic, ethnic and cultural differences in national populations mean similar challenges are encountered.

Migration makes an overwhelmingly positive contribution to economic and social development globally, both in host and source communities. This reality is however often misrepresented and combines with a lack of protection to create significant vulnerabilities for migrants, in particular among already marginalized groups – such as women, youth, minorities, or people with disabilities. Migration can be voluntary or forced, with different degrees of voluntariness, coercion and deception, in-between. Forced migration, including displacement, intensifies vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation, and needs to be urgently addressed in its various forms. Indeed, how governments and other stakeholders shape and respond to migration fundamentally affect its broader impact in a given country.

6 R. Skeldon: *International Migration, Internal Migration, Mobility and Urbanization: Towards More Integrated Approaches* (New York, 2017).

Migration and Displacement in Asia-Pacific

Migration

The Asia-Pacific region sees some of the largest migration flows globally, driven especially by uneven development and demographics. **In 2017, of the 258 million international migrants worldwide, 106 million were born in Asia, up from 65 million in 2000**⁷. Migration occurs primarily between countries located within the same region, accounting for 60% of migrants from Asia, largely for labour. The limited and inefficient channels to facilitate safe and regular labour migration are in stark contrast to its benefits and the demand for migrant work in the region. As a result, large numbers of migrants work in irregular status in destination countries, such as in Malaysia and Thailand.

Remittances to the region reached \$256 billion in 2017. While the efficiency of remittance channels is to be optimized, the amounts sent are **ten times the total official development assistance in the Asia-Pacific and directly benefit 10% of the population of the region**⁸, with significant further increases projected in coming years.

Figure 2: Labour supply and demand forecast by country in South and East Asia demonstrates the need for larger scale migration in the region⁹



7 UNDESA: *2017 International Migration Report* (New York, 2017).

8 P. De Vasconcelos et al: *Global Forum on Remittances, Investment and Development 2017: Official Report* (Rome, 2018); IFAD: *RemitSCOPE: Remittance markets and opportunities in Asia and the Pacific* (Rome, 2018).

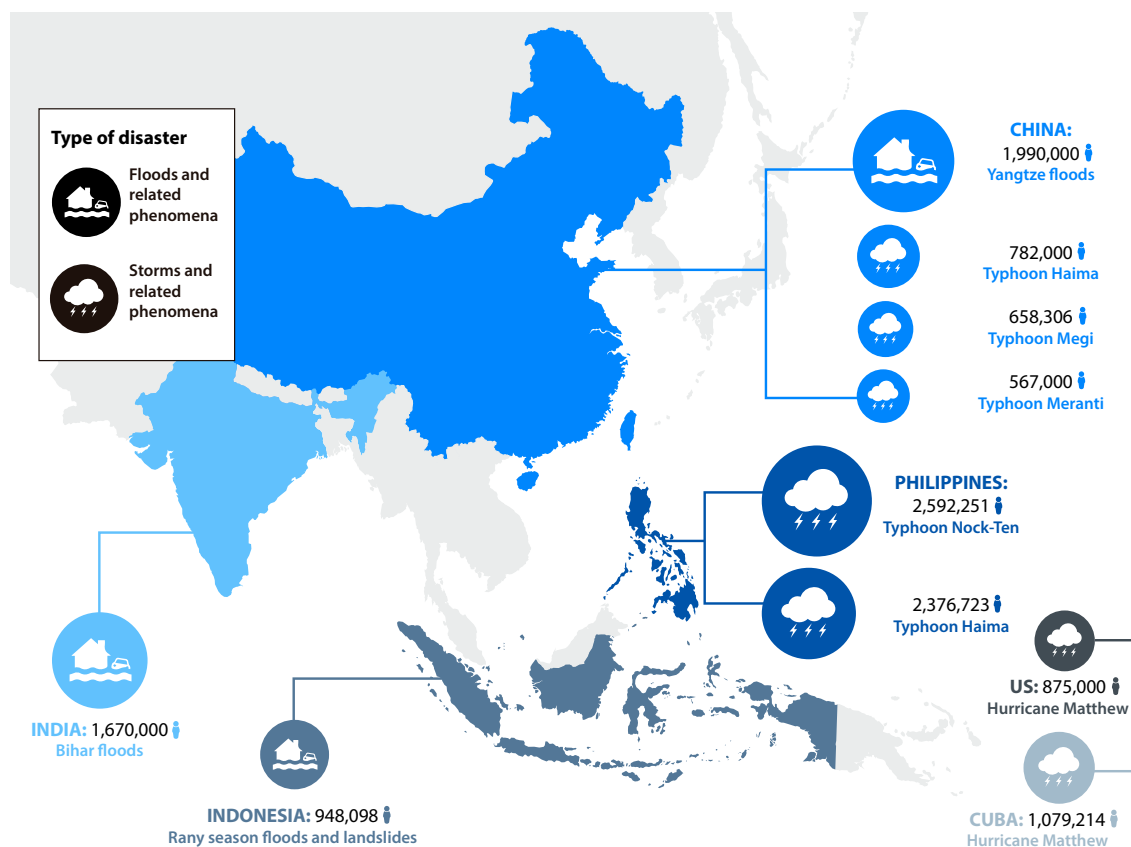
9 The Economist: *'Asia's Looming Labour Shortage'* *The Economist* (London, 11 February 2017). The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations or UNDP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Regional consultative processes on migration have been established recognizing the need for greater coordination and collaboration between countries, and engaging governments and non-government stakeholders in the recruitment and protection of migrant workers¹⁰. These are typically state-led and generally reflect host-source balances of power. At a national level, migration policy is often fragmented across government ministries, including labour, social welfare, health and education, as well as national security, with limited coordination undermining coherence.

Initiatives to improve data on migration have developed, given its importance in better understanding, managing, and advocating on the issue, with progress at a macro-level informing policy dialogues¹¹. Yet there is still an urgent need for more and targeted data collection, and for this to inform policy and programming for improved development outcomes at all levels, from international to local.

Displacement

Figure 3: The 10 largest displacement events in 2016 were climate-related with the Asia-Pacific region significantly affected. Forecasts indicate that this is likely to increase in coming years¹²



10 These include the Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue. An analysis of approaches can be found in: P. Pittman: *Alternative Approaches to the Governance of Transnational Labor Recruitment: A Framework for Discussion* (Washington, D.C., 2013).

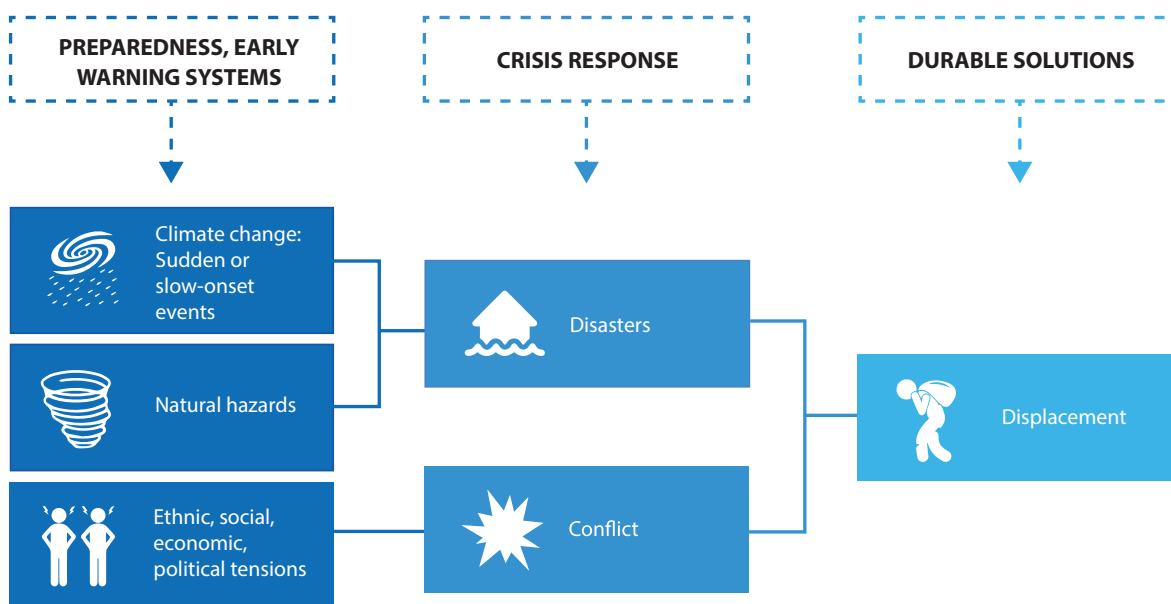
11 Examples include the [Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development \(KNOMAD\)](#) and the [Migration Data Portal](#).

12 UNDP and ODI: *Climate change, migration and displacement* (New York and London, 2017). The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations or UNDP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Disasters and climate change are increasingly contributing to forced migration including displacement in the region, whether through rapid or slow onset events¹³. The UN Secretary General noted that in 2017 ‘extreme weather events were largely responsible for displacing almost 19 million people around the world. **Asia-Pacific is the most disaster prone region in the world** and accounted for almost half this number’¹⁴. Notable and severe displacement events also occurred due to conflict in Myanmar, with 655,500 fleeing to Bangladesh, as well as in Marawi City in the Philippines connected to violent extremism, leaving 350,000 displaced. Migration from small islands in the Pacific, though smaller in absolute numbers, is significant proportionally, and results from sudden- and slow-onset natural disasters, the adverse effects of climate change, or environmental degradation. Climate hotspots in the Pacific are highly likely to become source areas for climate change-related migration, whether from urban, coastal and delta areas prone to floods, or communities affected by droughts.

Displacement, as with other forms of unsafe migration, can reduce resilience to abuses and exploitation including human trafficking, and reverse development gains more broadly. Responses are mostly reactive rather than based on proactive preparation to displacement events before they occur, although examples of good practices are now emerging, largely as a result of improved data and analysis¹⁵.

Figure 4: Displacement, causes, and broad responses at different stages



¹³ The *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018* provides an overview of events, trends and vulnerabilities to internal displacement, including a regional focus on East Asia and the Pacific.

¹⁴ UN Secretary-General's comments at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Ulaanbaatar, 4 July 2018.

¹⁵ IDMC: *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018* (Geneva, 2018).

Global Developments: SDGs, Migration and Displacement



Agenda 2030 and the SDGs will not be achieved without a specific focus on migration. The Agenda 2030 Declaration explicitly addresses this need highlighting that ‘migration is a multi-dimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses.’

Various targets¹⁶ under the following SDGs specifically address migration, integrated with other development concerns:

- GOAL 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- GOAL 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- GOAL 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries;
- GOAL 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;
- GOAL 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Other SDGs are directly impacted by migration and displacement; for example, health and education for all will not be achieved without a specific focus on migrants and displaced persons. Further, **migrants are often among the most marginalized and excluded populations in society, without access to justice or support services.** While many migrants contribute to social security programmes, often they cannot tap into their benefits due to restrictions, both in destination and sometimes in source countries¹⁷.

The Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees have resulted from the understanding that current international frameworks are inadequate to address the scale and impacts of human mobility. UN member states have demonstrated the political will to deal with this issue more proactively and comprehensively through the agreements, finalised in July 2018, and it is now for all stakeholders to support them in implementing the Compacts.

¹⁶ These are targets 5.2, 8.7, 8.8, 10.7, 10.c, 16.2 and 17.18.

¹⁷ Report of the UN Secretary-General, *Making Migration Work for All*, to the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, 12 December 2017.

UNDP on Migration and Displacement

Mandate and experience

With many years of experience in these areas, UNDP has a key role in supporting governments and other actors to respond to the new and evolving challenges related to migration and displacement, **facilitating a whole-of-government, whole-of-society, and whole-of-development approach.**

As a member of the Global Migration Group, UNDP co-chairs the 'Working Group on Mainstreaming Migration into National Development Strategies', and is an observer to the Global Forum on Migration and Development¹⁸. In co-implementing the **Mainstreaming Migration into National Development Strategies** programme and the **Joint Migration and Development Initiative**, UNDP has delivered development results from international, to national and local levels, together with and for partners.

In response to crises, both natural or man-made, UNDP works to build resilience to risks for displaced and vulnerable populations, whether through preparedness, recovery and access to livelihoods, or re/integration support. UNDP coordinates the Global Cluster for Early Recovery in humanitarian emergencies, **seeking to transcend the humanitarian and development divide**, and has worked closely with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and UNHCR in this area as well as in the development of an approach to **durable solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees**¹⁹.

The experience of the UNDP initiative **UN Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT)** in developing multi-sectoral cooperation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region sets a precedent for this work. This includes UN-ACT's role as Secretariat to the intergovernmental COMMIT Process and its support to the implementation of a regional plan of action at (sub-) national levels. The initiative convenes a network of partners engaged in counter-trafficking and migration for cooperation and joint initiatives, and integrates feedback mechanisms to policies through a research and M&E strategy.



¹⁸ UNDP's approach is detailed in [Guidance Note: A Development Approach to Migration and Displacement](#).

¹⁹ UNDP, UNHCR, GCER and Global Protection Cluster: [Durable Solutions: Preliminary Operational Guide](#) (Brussels, 2016).

Approach

UNDP applies a holistic approach to migration and displacement, from source to destination, and re/integration. In Asia and the Pacific, this is aligned to the Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees, and will support the development of tailored programming through the following five broad areas:



1. Ensuring migration is a choice rather than a necessity, supporting alternatives where needed, and developing early warning systems and mitigation to displacement events

Emphasizing the use of data to analyse migration and displacement flows, root causes and drivers, we will work with partners to better understand, promote and implement appropriate responses. Adaptation strategies will be increasingly important in response to a changing climate and climate events, while UNDP's ongoing programming and partnerships in sustainable development, particularly in areas of governance, livelihoods and the environment, will also be key.



2. Empowering migrants and host communities, facilitating integration and social cohesion

Migrants and displaced persons, host communities and governments at local and national levels will be engaged to increase social cohesion, and respect between and within populations of different origins. Support for integration efforts will be dependent on the specific contexts involved, yet seeks to build greater understanding and bonds among host communities and migrants.



3. Strengthening channels for migrants and diaspora communities within and from the region to contribute to sustainable development in their home countries

We seek to catalyse the positive impact of migrants and diaspora communities through outreach and engagement. Policy advice and advocacy will be implemented to facilitate greater coherence in this area, thereby enhancing contributions to development. This includes understanding and supporting the significant, positive non-financial effects of migrants and diasporas on development.



4. Building the resilience of migrants and displaced persons to a range of vulnerabilities, including trafficking in persons

To prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of displacement, and potential exploitation and abuse of migrants, we will implement pre-emptive programming to build resilience. Drawing on the substantial experience and partnerships in counter-trafficking in the region, comprehensive evidence-based responses will be facilitated. Further, host communities will be engaged to reduce consequences of conflicts, disasters and climate change events on displaced persons and refugees.



5. Supporting the re/integration of migrants and displaced persons, helping to develop a range of services tailored to their needs

From successful circular migration, to returning displaced persons from conflicts or disasters, a range of services are needed for successful re/integration. Some may be in place to draw upon in a given environment, while in others capacities will need to be developed and monitored for sustainability. Individualised plans and services for exploited and trafficked persons are required to support re/integration in special cases.

Different approaches will be relevant in different countries due to a range of factors, in particular, the migration and displacement dynamics that are present. Social, economic, political and cultural variables will also have an impact on the types of programming and partnerships to be selected.

Coming together in new ways of working that are constantly evolving, **UNDP seeks to provide a platform for partners, both traditional and non-traditional, to convene and collaborate in developing approaches to migration and displacement.** Throughout the support to governments, migrants, their source and host communities, different interventions will be co-created, co-supported and co-implemented, using new technologies and networks as viable and appropriate.



Together with our partners, **UNDP will integrate the provision of tools, technical assistance and capacity building, with constant learning from new collaborations to improve responses.** We will convene dialogues and support policy advice and advocacy at regional, national and local levels. Recognising the value and importance of data, research and dissemination of knowledge products will be fundamental throughout the areas of work.

South-South cooperation will be explored, developed and promoted in development approaches to migration and displacement, acknowledging the experiences generated throughout Asia and the Pacific to date. Bi- and multilateral mechanisms and relationships already enjoyed by countries in the region will be important channels in building effective responses and cooperation.

Human rights and gender are significant concerns in migration and displacement, and are considered and incorporated throughout UNDP's programming and partnerships. The promotion and protection of human rights are fundamental to the quality of life of migrants and displaced persons, and the highly gendered nature of the phenomena means that different gender-based vulnerabilities and resiliencies need to be better understood and addressed.



Partnerships

New multi-stakeholder partnerships and approaches are needed to facilitate more positive migration outcomes for migrants, their families, and host and source communities. While governments, civil society and international organisations remain key, the private sector has also emerged as an important partner in addressing migration and displacement. Indeed, new analyses and expertise have been brought to the issue beyond the traditional actors as a result²⁰.

UNDP closely engages with the UN Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism to strengthen policy and programme coherence. As co-chair of the Technical Working Group for Disaster Risk Management, together with UNISDR and UNESCAP, this has involved coordinating inter-agency work with ASEAN for El Nino Early Warning/Early Action. On migration and sustainable societies, UNDP works closely with IOM, UNESCAP, ILO, UNHCR, UNWomen, UNFPA and UNODC.

Development agencies, financial institutions and think-tanks that have developed specialization in these areas will also be engaged, including: World Bank, ADB, Stockholm Environment Institute, Internally Displaced Monitoring Center, OECD and the Overseas Development Institute²¹.

With migrants and displaced persons, their source and host communities at the heart of all of our efforts, they will be closely engaged in the development, implementation and monitoring of all interventions.

Contact

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²⁰ See for example: MGI: *People on the move: Global Migration's Impact and Opportunity* (New York, 2016).

²¹ Publications related to migration and displacement by such agencies include: OECD: *Perspectives on Global Development 2017: International Migration in a Shifting World* (Paris, 2016); or World Bank: *Forcibly Displaced: Toward a development approach supporting refugees, the internally displaced, and their hosts* (Washington, D.C., 2016).



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