

## **CFMUNESCO 2018**

**COMMITTEE:** International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

**TOPIC:** The Question Of Climate Change, Natural Disasters and Displacement: a multi track approach to filling the protection gaps

**CHAIRS:** Paola Piccini, Emma Bellon

### **INTRODUCTION**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest impartial, neutral, independent and humanitarian network in the world. Its mission is to alleviate human suffering, protect life and health, provide assistance and uphold human dignity especially during armed conflicts and other emergencies such as epidemics, floods and earthquakes. It is present in every country and supported by millions of volunteers. It is not a single organization. It is composed of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the 190 individual National Societies. Each has its own legal identity and role, but seven Fundamental Principles unite them all: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. In particular, the first of these principles reports: “The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.”

It is clear that the ICRC has a central role in the issue we are putting a focus on. The ICRC has always paid great attention on migration and it is well known that there are many underlying causes to explain this phenomenon. One of these is natural disasters that provoke people displacement, and that are frequently strongly related to climate changes. To avoid and prevent any calamities the ICRC has always tried to raise awareness about the right behaviour to adopt towards the nature that surrounds us. Warming temperatures, changes in precipitation, increase in the frequency or intensity of some extreme weather events, and the rise of sea levels, are just some of the events we have to deal with. Of course we have to keep in mind that natural hazards are not the only reason that cause displacement of people. Conflicts, tensions and the political status of the government may also be the reasons for displacement.

When addressing this issue, we have to focus on how the ICRC can be more effective in those situations and fill the gaps in the protection regime. Climate change, natural disasters and displacement represent one of the biggest issues in the last decades for humanity so the importance of this topic could not be denied or ignored because it involves everyone.

### **KEY WORDS**

**Climate:** climate is the average course of weather conditions for a particular location over a period of many years.

**Climate change:** a long-term change in the earth's climate, especially a change due to an increase in the average atmospheric temperature.

**Natural disaster:** a sudden and terrible event in nature (such as a hurricane, tornado, or flood) that usually results in serious damage and many deaths.

**Displacement:** the displacement of people refers to the forced movement of people from their locality or environment and occupational activities. It is a form of social change caused by a

number of factors, the most common being armed conflict. Natural disasters, famine, development and economic changes may also be a cause of displacement.

**IDPs:** According to UNHCR, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border." This, however, is a descriptive definition, which does not confer them a special legal status because IDPs, being inside their country, remain entitled to all the rights and guarantees as citizens and other habitual residents of their country. As such, national authorities have the primary responsibility to prevent forced displacement and to protect IDPs.

**Refugee:** The refugees are people who have fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution. The risks to their safety and life were so great that they felt they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country because their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.

**Climate refugees:** Climate refugees or climate migrants are a subset of environmental migrants who were forced to flee "due to sudden or gradual alterations in the natural environment related to at least one of three impacts of climate change: sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and drought and water scarcity."

**Asylum-seeker:** An asylum-seeker is a person who has left his/her country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who has not yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on his/her asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.

**Migrant:** There is no internationally accepted legal definition of a migrant. Most agencies and organizations understand migrants to be people staying outside their country of origin, who are not asylum-seekers or refugees. Some migrants leave their country because they want to work, study or join their family, for example. Others feel they must leave because of poverty, political unrest, gang violence, **natural disasters** or other serious circumstances that exist there. Lots of people do not fit the legal definition of a refugee but could nevertheless be in danger if they went home.

## **EXPLANATION OF THE TOPIC**

Natural hazards have always happened since ancient times. In the last decades the revolutionary discoveries of man in the field of technology and science have led to the sacrifice of the importance of the care for the Planet Earth. The word "care" is a strong one in the vocabulary of the ICRC. The care for sick or wounded people is the aim of the ICRC that, furthermore, has always been present even for the persons who suffer natural disasters.

If we put a focus on the deadliest natural disasters of the last years the ICRC was there to help people as its mission requires. These are some quick examples of the most terrible events that recently have struck our Planet and the role of the ICRC in those circumstances:

- **Haiti Earthquake:** On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 with a magnitude of 7.0 this earthquake was the most terrible one since 1770. It led to 2 million homeless and 3 million persons in need of emergency. The ICRC has had a permanent presence in Haiti since 1994. In 2010 the ICRC gave a rapid response to help the Haitian Red Cross aid the vast number of people affected by the earthquake. To take care of the people the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement decided to begin a project that was completed in 2012 with the creation of pumping stations to ensure the access to water for 200,000 people. (<https://www.icrc.org/eng/where-we-work/americas/haiti/overview-haiti.htm>)

- **Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami:** A 9.1 magnitude earthquake followed by a tsunami hit the east coast of Japan on 11 March, 2011. This earthquake was documented as the 4<sup>th</sup> most powerful earthquake in the entire world and the largest earthquake to ever strike Japan. It was responsible for the death of 15,894 people with 6,152 people injured and 2,562 people missing. The damage at the buildings were devastating. The result was 127,000 buildings destroyed and over 272,000 buildings half collapsed. The earthquake caused a near nuclear disaster since there was a partial meltdown in 3 reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. The ICRC, even in this case, was immediately active. It deployed 62 response teams over the first 24 hours since the happening of the disaster. The teams involved 400 doctors with the help of nurses and support staff. Then the ICRC used public buildings, such as schools to distribute 30,000 blankets. Other efforts were done by the Japanese Red Cross to help the people. (<http://www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/press-releases/asia-pacific/japan/japan-red-cross-responds-to-one-of-strongest-earthquakes-on-record/>).

These were just some examples to understand how unpredictable nature is and to see how the ICRC works in cases of natural hazards that can lead to displacement. The phenomenon itself is something we have to pay attention to, even in terms of laws. The purpose of the ICRC is to take care of all the people that suffer due to, in this case, natural disasters.

It is obvious that laws make the work of ICRC easier, in order to give relief to people that are forced to move from their home. Taking into account the existing laws, to analyse the protection gaps that we have to fulfil, the most important document about displacement is the “Guiding principles on internal displacement” that was presented in the Commission on Human Rights in 1998 (<http://www.un-documents.net/gpid.htm>). This report it is a soft-law instrument that has laid the keystones, the only one that we got, to face the problem of protection holes towards the IDPs. In fact the third principle says that:

1. National authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.
2. Internally displaced persons have the right to request and to receive protection and humanitarian assistance from these authorities. They shall not be persecuted or punished for making such a request.

Even though the “Guiding principles on internal displacement” highlight the right of protection for IDPs, there is still much work to do. This is because the “Guiding principles on internal displacement” are not legally binding. On the other hand they are important because they have enjoyed a wide support from the international community since they were created. The main problem is that the “Guiding principles on internal displacement” cannot always be applicable. For example they cannot meet particular needs of people displaced by slow-onset disasters such as droughts. Furthermore the most important question is that the “Guiding principles on internal displacement” entrust countries to maintain the protection of the IDPs but there is no international universal treaty which applies specifically to IDPs. The role of the ICRC becomes unique in this issue because it can give support to the displaced even if it is hard because of the lack of laws. What we need to do is to understand how to fill these protection gaps in terms of laws keeping in mind the interest and the care for people as the ICRC requires.

## **NATIONS AND ORGANIZATION INVOLVED**

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in 2017 the 3 countries most affected by natural hazards were: **Philippines**, with a total of 2,529,000 new displacements due to natural hazards, 764,000 of which were caused by the Tropical Depression Urduja / Kai-Tak on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 2017. Then **Cuba**, with a total of 1,738,000 new displacements because of Hurricane

Irma on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 2017. Last but not least is **China**, with terrible floods on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, 2017 that brought to 162,000 new displacements.

It is clear by these examples that the countries that are most at risk of internal displacements due to natural disasters are located between southern and south-east Asia, some regions in Africa and some islands. In fact other countries that were devastated by natural hazards were: **India**, with monsoon floods that happened from 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 2017 to 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 2017 with 1,344,000 new displacements; **Ethiopia**, with a drought that caused 381,000 new displacements, and **Bangladesh** that had 478,000 new displacements because of the Tropical Cyclone Mora.

These data highlight a phenomenon strictly linked to displacement that happens frequently in Africa: cross-borders displacement, when people decide to go to neighbouring countries to save themselves and their families from conflicts, situation of violence and disasters. This happens in particular in Western and Eastern Africa where droughts, as we said above, regularly force hundreds of thousands of people to flee from their homes. While cross-borders displacement happens frequently in regions of Africa, in Asia, that is the continent with the highest number of IDPs, cross-border displacement it is not something so common. Backwards in Asia the impacts of disasters and effects of climate change contribute to people migrating abroad.

The institutions that proclaim the rights of the IDPs, that collect and analyse the data about them and that you will often hear during our debates are:

- **UNHCR:** the UN Refugee Agency, a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.
- **IDMC:** The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the world's authoritative source of data and analysis on internal displacement.
- **NRC:** The Norwegian Refugee Council, an independent humanitarian organisation helping people forced to flee.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN**

In May 2016 the ICRC published an article which described its strategy from 2016 to 2019, in order to help IDPs. It consists in: taking a holistic view about the situation facing all the needs of IDPs and trying to address them alongside the negative consequences of natural disasters; taking into account all the present and future problems concerning displacement; when possible, seeking to prevent displacement and help IDPs that live in host communities or in remote areas.

For more info check this link: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/internal-displacement-our-approach-and-strategy-2016-2019> .

Several Conventions and Summits have been held during the years on the matter of displacement related to climate change and natural hazard and the protection of IDPs. This is just a brief timeline:

- **1951** - Geneva Convention defined for the first time the term “refugee” and outlined the rights of displaced.
- **1998** - The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement issued by the Secretary General of the United Nations identify internationally recognized rights and guarantees of persons who have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to a number of factors, including natural disaster. Those who have been displaced from their homes but not crossed international borders are not refugees, but rather “internally displaced persons”.
- **2009** - On 23 October, at a Special Summit in Uganda the 17 countries of the African Union signed off on the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

## CHAIR'S SUGGESTIONS

Climate change, natural disasters and displacement are tightly tied up between them. Delegates are therefore invited to give the right value to this connection and try and find all the protection gaps regarding these three phenomena. At the same time, delegates are required to respect the principles of the ICRC, thus putting the care for people at the first place.

In this Chair Report you have already focused on some protection gaps that need to be filled but for sure the greatest obstacle to tackle in this issue is the fact that there is still no official international legislation about IDPs.

Moreover, you could work in order to decrease the trend of displacement so you could concentrate on the continents with the highest risk to suffer because of natural disasters.

You should also think about financial tools, reminding that not every country that could be involved in natural hazards have the possibilities to face all the damages and then focus on displaced people.

As ICRC delegates, remind that you have to face all the possible scenarios, so be open-minded and try to have a holistic view about how common and shared solution could improve the situation. Discover all the shortcomings, in terms of laws and institutions, and work on this topic with a spirit of care for displaced people.

One last warning! Pay attention: within CFMUNESCO UNESCO Committee, your colleagues are going to debate on quite the same topic, but from a very different point of view. On the UNESCO topic "The question of Natural Disasters and Risk Reduction, with a focus on School Safety and UNESCO Designated Sites", they are going to debate about Disaster Risk Reduction, it means that they are not going to think about managing the disaster and the displacement of involved people, but on reducing the risk by proposing policies and strategies in order to reduce all those factors that could lead to a disaster. However, it could be useful for you to read also the UNESCO chair report to find out more about natural disasters and to have a more complete view of the overall issue itself, but always remember that the aspects debated by the UNESCO delegates are not ours.

## BEING A DELEGATE IN THE ICRC

Please note that the Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has a peculiarity that makes it different from all CFMUNESCO committees but, for the very same reason, absolutely stimulating.

This committee has been structured according to the actual procedures of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Within CFMUNESCO ICRC, each Country is represented by two delegates from the same school, one representing the Government of the Country itself (for example France, Spain, Italy etc.) whereas the other representing the Red Cross or Red Crescent National Society of the same Country (for example the France Red Cross etc.).

**Please pay attention to the Country you have been assigned since the two delegates may have different points of view on the topics on debate, therefore they can act independently from each other.**

This means that:

- during preparation, both delegates have to focus on the positions they are going to represent during the debate (as a State or as a National Society) and they both can work on specific draft clauses or resolutions;
- during lobbying, both delegates can present or sign a draft resolution: the Chairs will remind them to sign the drafts with "Country name" (e.g. "FRANCE"), if representing the State, or with "Country name + NS" (e.g. "FRANCE NS"), if representing the National Society;
- during committee sessions, both delegates can actively take part in the debates by delivering speeches, presenting points and motions etc.

- during voting procedures, both delegates can cast their vote: the Chairs will take note of all the votes.

Since the ICRC is a resolution based committee, **we invite all delegates to come to the conference with some draft clauses or with a complete draft resolution**, and we recommend them to be willing to cooperate with other delegates.

**The ICRC is going to be CFMUNESCO biggest committee, being composed by about 60 delegates. Thanks to the size of the committee and the double representation, the RCRC will be a great opportunity both for experienced delegates and for less experienced ones.**

#### **SOURCES:**

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>

<https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/176563/idp-definition>

<https://www.icrc.org/en/international-review/migration-and-displacement>

<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/internally-displaced-persons-and-international-humanitarian-law-factsheet>

<http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/>

<https://www.nrc.no/what-we-do/speaking-up-for-rights/internal-displacement/>

[http://www.refworld.org/cgi-](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=599339934&skip=0&query=climate%20refugees)

[bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=599339934&skip=0&query=climate%20refugees](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=599339934&skip=0&query=climate%20refugees)

Specific data about internal displacement:

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>

Specific data about national legislation on IDPs and their protection:

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/law-and-policy/>

Main United Nations resolutions on the topic:

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/286](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/286)

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/243](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/243)