



24 May 2022



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## About the Webinar

In remembrance of two powerful cyclones that hit southeast Asia in May 2019 and May 2020 – climatic catastrophes that displaced millions of people overnight, UNESCO is organizing a **Webinar to stimulate the global dialogue around the impact of climate change and climate displacement on the right to education on 24 May 2022 (13:30 – 15:30 CET)**. Given the increasing impact of climate change on human mobility, UNESCO launched in 2020 an ongoing initiative to investigate the barriers to education posed by climate change directly, as well as climate-driven displacement, taking into account heightened human mobility and the policy implications thereon.

## Context and background

In 2019, 24.9 million people were internally displaced as a result of disasters (IDMC 2019). In 2020, the number jumped to 30.7 million. The catastrophic effects of climate change are no longer isolated emergencies but have become the new global norm - a reality that is only intensifying each year.

While there is significant literature regarding the nexus between climate-induced displacement and other rights- such as the right to legal residency abroad, **there is little to no information on the specific linkages between climate change, displacement and the right to education.**

The right to education is a human right for all persons. While the protection of the right to education for certain vulnerable and marginalized groups- such as refugees, women, girls, indigenous communities, among others – has been much discussed, the specific group of persons affected and displaced by climate change (flooding, drought, sea-level rise, hurricanes) has been notably missing in the picture. These persons also face significant barriers to education, such as:

- Schooling infrastructure destroyed by floods and prolonged school closures
- Language barriers for persons displaced in other regions
- Risk of dropout to pursue economic activity following climate-induced poverty
- The lack of legal residency rights for persons displaced internationally, and even internally in some cases, as a result of climate change

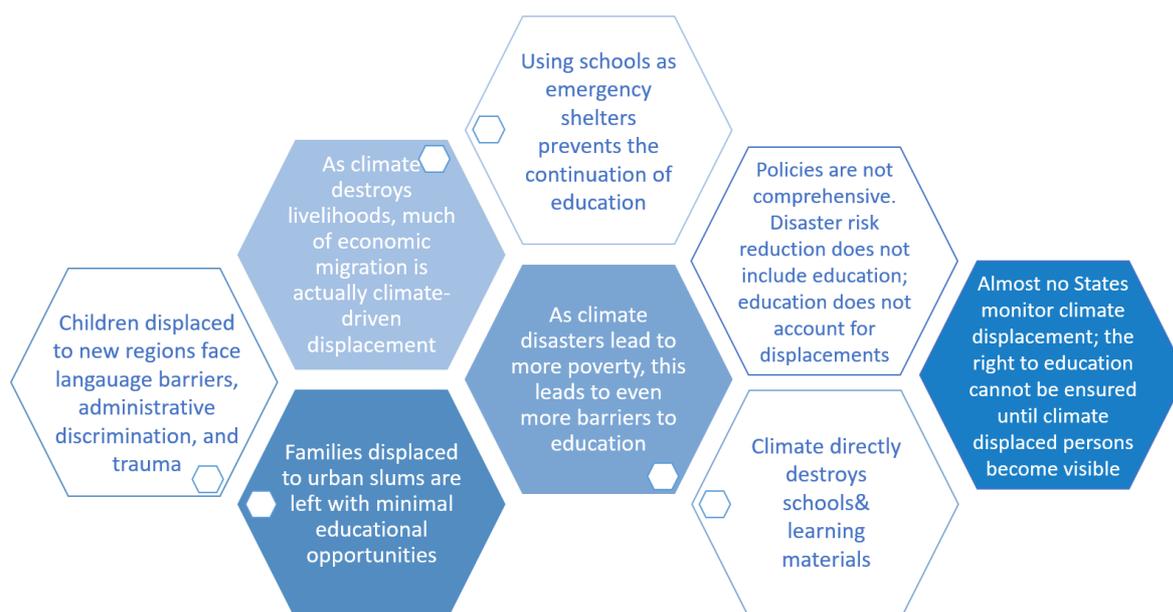
**The barriers to education faced by climate-displaced persons are affecting a larger portion of the global population each year.** Indeed, those displaced by climate change are not limited to those displaced by disasters – which have occurred for centuries, although research shows that climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of such disasters. Populations can be displaced due to loss of territory (sea-level rise); lack of food and water (desertification); and loss of livelihoods (drought and flooding destroying agriculture; coral bleaching impacting tourism). Therefore, to fully realise SDG 4 and protect and fulfil the right to education for all, it is critical to ensure this growing, but politically invisible, population can continue to access education, as well.

In order to build evidence on the real barriers to education that exist on the ground and develop recommendations for climate displaced persons’ right to education, UNESCO has developed the initiative – “The Impacts of Climate Change and Displacement on the Right to Education”- with three main milestones:

- A policy paper containing a literature review and general recommendations published in December 2020;
- In-depth country case studies with empirical data collection in four regions (Asia & the Pacific, Latin America & the Caribbean, East Africa, and Southeast Europe); and
- A global synthesis report containing policy recommendations and tailored practices for countries around the globe.

## Rationale

While empirical evidence is still being gathered, preliminary findings indicate the following trends across all regions around the globe:



While these general trends are evident in almost all reviewed countries, it is important to also recognize that the **challenges are much more complex due to the varying displacement patterns and subsequent varying barriers to education** between the different regions.

Regarding the displacement patterns, research shows that, while all four regions studied exhibit temporary climate displacement patterns following rapid-onset events – such as hurricanes, cyclones, flooding, and landslides that force millions out of their homes overnight, Asia & the Pacific presents the most circular displacement – moving for work while the climate threatens livelihoods and returning to rural lands once conditions ease. East African affected persons often are displaced to urban slums or move to refugee camps, while persons displaced by rapid-onset events in the Caribbean typically return to their place of origin after temporary displacement, given the limited mobility options on islands.

**Displacement patterns are different across countries and regions, and so are the barriers to education amidst climate displacement.** For example, among the Caribbean islands, there seems to be no language barriers during climate displacement whereas language barriers present a major challenge for the climate displaced persons in Asia & the Pacific, given that being displaced just to the next province over within the same country often entails speaking a different local dialect or ethnic minority language. Similarly, climate-driven livelihood losses and subsequent poverty present a major barrier for participation in education in East Africa, given that the vast majority of the population is employed in agriculture and nomadic pastoralism. They spend any available funds to buy food amidst extreme drought and starvation, leaving limited financial resources for schooling. In the Balkan states, however, a smaller percentage of the population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, and therefore the impact of floods and droughts on income levels is less of a barrier to education than in East Africa.

In this context, the objective of this Webinar is **to foster a global dialogue on the complexities of climate displacement and the barriers to education** posed by climate change while bringing awareness of this rather novel phenomenon to policymakers and practitioners in order to, more specifically:

- Gather insights from experts and critical actors from various regions studied to better understand specific challenges and trends;
- Identify and discuss common as well as context-specific emerging challenges, as well as the varied and different patterns of displacement and barriers to education among the different regions;
- Taking into account the existing lack of a single, comprehensive definition of “climate-displaced person,” explore whether and/or why having such a standardized and widely-accepted definition is politically, legally, and functionally important;
- Brainstorm preliminary policy messages and key takeaways to protect and fulfill the right to education in the face of climate-driven disruptions and displacement.

## The scope and deliverables of the webinar

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The Webinar will focus on four **key questions which will be discussed in a round-table panel with key experts and stakeholders**:

1. How can countries best **identify populations** prone to, or currently experiencing, the effects of climate change and climate displacement, as well as the **barriers to education** such groups face? What are some barriers to education as a result of climate change that are often

overlooked, taking into account **complex socio-economic vulnerabilities**? Additionally, it is clear that all SIDS are particularly prone to climate change and climate displacement. How can the particular geographic and socio-economic challenges that render SIDS so vulnerable be addressed?

2. Taking into account the lack of a single definition of “climate-displaced person,” is agreeing on a **standardized and widely-accepted definition of climate displacement** politically, legally, and functionally important - more specifically to ensure the right to education for all, and if so, why?
3. In what ways can countries strengthen the **synergy across disaster risk reduction policy, education policy**, and climate change/environmental policy so that the right to education is addressed more systematically in emergency response plans as is the case for shelter, food, and sanitation? What are some **promising practices and policies** already in place in some affected countries that could serve as a model for others?
4. What regional cooperation mechanisms currently exist that could permit states to engage in horizontal cooperation in order to share knowledge and solutions? What new forms of regional cooperation could be envisaged in the future?

The outcomes of this discussion, which will be summarized by the moderator at the end of the Webinar, will inform further the development of the Global Synthesis Report and the policy recommendations which will be developed late 2022.

## Modalities, format and participants

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The Seminar will bring together representatives from various countries, international and national experts, UN agencies and international organisations, civil society representatives and a youth representative. The Webinar will be divided into two sessions, with the first session comprised of a presentation on this initiative by UNESCO and interventions by key actors. The second session will be comprised of a panel discussion with experts and country officials focusing on the four key questions defined above respectively. This will be followed by a Q/A session. At the close of the session, the moderator will propose some key takeaways.

The Webinar will take place via the Zoom platform with the working language as English. While the ultimate policy recommendations will be targeted at Member States, addressing an issue as complex and interdisciplinary as this requires action from all stakeholders. Therefore, the target audience of this Webinar is comprised of:

- National education policymakers
- Disaster risk management policymakers at the various levels
- International organizations
- Civil society and private entities, and philanthropies
- Experts in practice and academia
- Communities and individuals directly affected by climate change and displacement.