



## A claim for climate justice and protection measures: IDPs in Asia-Pacific are at risk

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**Abstract (40 words max):** Climate change and natural disasters' impact on IDPs in Asia-Pacific must be viewed from a climate justice perspective. A rights-based approach, prevention measures, and participation in decision-making are crucial in building a protection system for IDPs.

In the vast and diverse Asia-Pacific region, the stark reality of natural disasters and climate change-induced internal displacement unfolds with staggering intensity. From the flood-ravaged lands of India's Kerala state to the vulnerable coastal communities of Bangladesh and the sinking islands of the Pacific, the impacts are relentless and far-reaching. In 2018, Kerala experienced devastating floods, triggered by heavy monsoon rains intensified by climate change,

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displacing millions and leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Meanwhile, Bangladesh grapples with the recurring challenges of cyclones, floods, and sea-level rise, where events like [Cyclone Sidr](#) in 2007 and [Cyclone Amphan](#) in 2020 uprooted entire communities.

The Pacific Islands, facing the merciless onslaught of rising sea levels, confront the very real prospect of losing their homes and heritage. These real-life stories of resilience, struggle, and displacement underscore the urgent need for action to address the plight of those affected by climate change and natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific region.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres [noted](#) that

Climate change is happening now and to all of us. No country or community is immune. And, as is always the case, the poor and vulnerable are the first to suffer and the worst hit.

In this regard, the unequal result of climate change is not only limited to the gap between countries. Different groups, such as low-income communities, children, women, LGBTQ+, low caste, and people with disability, are all affected differently by climate change. As a result, the concept of [climate justice](#), which examines climate catastrophe from the perspective of human rights, has gained popularity. In 2021, the Asia-Pacific region [experienced](#) the most severe impact of climate change, including disasters such as sea-level rising, typhoons, floods, and droughts. These disasters were further exacerbated by anthropogenic harms, such as increasing greenhouse effects, aerosols, changes in land cover, and deforestation. As a result, [21.3 million people](#) were internally displaced in the region, including East and South Asia and the Pacific. This figure, along with the growing impact of climate change, strongly reminds us that attention must be paid not only to the mitigation measures of the impact but also to the intervention to protect internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to climate change and natural disasters. These issues have been recently discussed in depth in a [joint research article](#).

### **Climate justice and three crucial concepts for IDPs protection**

The issue of climate change and natural disasters-induced IDPs in the Asia-Pacific region is closely linked to matters of climate justice. In countries such as the Pacific Islands, India and Bangladesh, climate change and natural disasters have had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities. Despite contributing little to [global CO2 emissions](#) per capita, inhabitants of the region have experienced sea-level rise, typhoons, floods, and droughts, leading to a significant number of IDPs. In [Bangladesh](#), for instance, climate change and natural disasters have threatened the homes and livelihoods of millions of people due to the country's flat topography, dense population, and weak infrastructure. Similarly, [India](#) has been vulnerable to extreme weather events, including floods and landslides, which can displace large numbers of people. Meanwhile, the

Pacific Islands are facing the threat of rising sea levels, which could force people to relocate to higher ground.

To address these issues, there needs to be a focus on distributive justice, which means a fair allocation of resources and benefits to those who are most affected. Fair distribution includes the funding for infrastructure and services to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised communities (such as children, women and the low caste) have access to the resources and can be supported in their need to rebuild their lives in a sustainable and resilient way.

The realisation of procedural justice is also essential, which means that vulnerable communities, including IDPs, must have a say in the decision-making processes that affect them. Their voices and perspectives must be taken into account in the development of policies and programmes that affect them. Consequently, a comprehensive strategy that addresses both distributive and procedural justice is needed to address climate justice and protect IDPs in the Asia-Pacific region. In this regard, three key concepts for [protecting IDPs](#) can be carried out concurrently and are articulated as follows.

### ***Protection of rights***

It is crucial to focus on the protection of the rights of IDPs who are affected by climate change and natural disasters. These individuals face numerous challenges in accessing basic services and rebuilding their lives after a disaster. Therefore, it is essential to take measures that fulfil the needs of IDPs directly in guaranteeing their rights while mitigating the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. Strengthening legal frameworks at the national and international levels can help to ensure that human rights are respected and upheld and that IDPs have access to necessities such as food, water, and shelter.

### ***Proactive prevention***

By focusing on prevention, the overall number of people who become displaced in the first place can be reduced. One way to prevent displacement is investing in [early warning systems](#) and [disaster risk reduction](#), as well as [disaster-endurable construction](#). Providing access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities can also reduce the risk of displacement by improving the overall well-being of affected communities.

Moreover, it is important to consider distributive justice and ensure that those who have more responsibility for causing climate change take accountability and support those affected by it. This will promote a fair and sustainable approach to preventing displacement and protecting the rights of IDPs in the Asia-Pacific region.

### ***Participation of IDPs in decision-making processes***

The involvement of climate change and natural disasters-induced IDPs in decision-making processes is a practical necessity for achieving climate justice in the Asia-Pacific region. The experiences of IDPs and their insights can provide

valuable information and perspectives that are essential for developing effective policies and action plans that meet their unique needs and challenges. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that their voices are heard and taken into account in the development and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. This will lead to more sustainable and inclusive solutions that benefit the entire region.

### **Way forward**

It is more vital than before for the governments of these countries to adopt proactive and forward-thinking actions to protect the most vulnerable people and communities who are on the verge of being uprooted from their homes. Consequently, states should include the protection of climate change and natural disasters-induced IDPs in national laws, policies and development plans to expedite actions in order to address and respond to such issues. States should also take this kind of IDPs into account in elaborating durable recommendations and accelerating implementation measures. They should also embolden climate litigation to increase the political will and accountability of national and international communities for climate change and natural disasters-induced IDPs. Additionally, civil society organisations, climate activists, frontline workers, policymakers, and experts should consider appropriate strategies and frameworks in consultation with the vulnerable and affected groups in order to reflect on the current and emerging needs, concerns, and challenges of the IDPs as a result of climate change and natural disasters.

Ensuring climate justice for climate change and natural disasters-induced IDPs could be a better solution for eliminating disparities among these vulnerable individuals and the communities concerned, enabling them to live in dignity. Let us remember that collective action is paramount. By championing the rights of IDPs, supporting their recovery efforts, and taking proactive measures to prevent displacement, we can create tangible change in their lives. Together, we can chart a path towards a more equitable and resilient future where no one is left behind in the face of climate change and natural disasters. The time for action is now – a time to stand in solidarity and embrace shared responsibility to protect and uplift those most affected by these pressing challenges.