

Addressing protection risks in a climate-changed world

Challenges and opportunities

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Key messages

Climate variability and change can exacerbate existing protection risks, create new protection risks, and impact drivers of conflict and fragility. As such, protection agencies need to get to grips with current and future climate changes in order to be better positioned to address these risks.

Protection agencies must build cross-organisational and systematic evidence, and tools such as climate change attribution studies and compound risk analysis should be utilised. Analysis must be context-specific and longitudinal and needs to differentiate between protection risks that are directly triggered and those that are exacerbated by climate change-influenced hazards.

Protection approaches need to adapt to account for climate stressors. Further work is required to better understand how anticipatory action and conflict early warning models and instruments can be applied to address vulnerabilities to underlying protection risks.

Protection in the context of disaster and climate change risk management requires incorporating a long-term view into preparedness and response measures. This includes advocating for the application of human rights frameworks to provide protection to people affected by climate change-influenced hazards.

Protection actors need to build new partnerships. This includes support to the capacities and resources of states, with a focus on long-term systems-strengthening as well as preparedness and response. Protection actors should also seek to establish collaborations with existing climate networks.

Protection actors need to familiarise themselves with the foundational elements of climate change, including concepts, terminology, the history and politics of climate negotiations. Climate actors need to work with the humanitarian and protection sector to consider how to incorporate a protection lens to climate risk analysis and climate mitigation and adaptation programmes.

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1 Introduction

Protection agencies are just starting to grapple with the implications of protection risks in a world in which the impacts of climate and environmental change are growing. There is much we know and can draw on to strengthen protection in the context of climate variability and change. This includes decades of operational experience on protection approaches for at-risk individuals and communities in conflict and non-conflict settings; conflict prevention/management and peacebuilding in complex crises; and disaster risk management techniques, which are increasingly being adapted to changing hazard and climate profiles.

Many protection actors are strengthening their knowledge and policy engagement. For example, in 2020 the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) convened a global event to explore the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and forced displacement (see DRC, 2020); the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) recently published on the tripartite intersection of displacement, conflict and climate change (see Peters et al., 2021); and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) have for some time been engaged in discussions and policy analysis on adapting legal frameworks relevant to displacement.

Yet, there is much still to be understood about how to analyse the relationships between slow and sudden-onset climate changes and human mobility. Those who are displaced or trapped in the face of climate change will have different protection needs that need to be better anticipated and addressed by protection actors. Part of the problem is that climate variability and change are additional challenges in fragile and complex situations. Lack of land tenure, dependencies on climate-sensitive livelihoods and political disenfranchisement often co-exist with ecosystem changes – land degradation, biodiversity loss, soil erosion and water insecurity. The intersection of climate variability and change with these underlying vulnerabilities can create local to regional risks. Existing literature recognises these challenges. It raises concerns about the gaps in the evidence base; how best to frame and pre-empt causal and complex inter-related links; the implications for current and future protection tools and approaches; and how evolving protection priorities can be financed.

In this briefing note we focus primarily on the operational (including legal) approaches that offer potential to protect people in situations of forced displacement or at risk of displacement where climate change may play an exacerbating role. Weak differentiation between protection risks triggered or exacerbated by climate change-influenced hazards are compounding this problem. While there is a wealth of evidence on protection risks linked to natural hazard-related disasters, there is much less on climate change-specific risks as this is a relatively new research area. Many of the ideas included in this paper are nascent for protection agencies.

This briefing note draws on a rapid review of secondary literature, a limited set of key stakeholder interviews, and a senior expert consultation (convened September 2021) that brought together

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more than 25 technical experts from across the protection, humanitarian, resilience, disaster risk management and climate sectors. What is offered is therefore an exploratory paper to act as a conversation starter that will require more in-depth, context-specific evidence to establish what works to strengthen protection outcomes for populations, including displacement-affected populations, at risk as a result of climate impacts. The original intention of this paper was to focus on the efforts of protection agencies to consider climate change in their work. For example, to explore how climate and hazards are, or could be, integrated into standardised approaches such as the protection analytical framework (GPC, 2021). While this is being considered, more broadly the absence of robust or documented examples of protection approaches that consider climate variability and change limit this ambition, and point to a gap to be addressed (see Recommendations (section 4.2) and section 3.1). We therefore instead focus on operational approaches to utilising climate and disaster entry points to expand the scope and action on minimising protection harms and managing protection risks.

1.1 Terminology and climate attribution

This briefing note uses the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) definition of protection: ‘all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e., human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law)’ (ICRC, 2018). Like many specialist protection agencies, the DRC operationalises this definition as people’s protection from violence, coercion and deprivation. DRC’s protection work aims to ensure that:

‘people affected by conflict and displacement can access their rights, live a life in dignity, and be safe and secure. This is accomplished by responding to, mitigating and reducing exposure to threats, and reducing protection related vulnerabilities and increasing capacities of conflict affected populations in relation to violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation’ (DRC, n.d.a).

In this paper, we use terms such as ‘influenced by climate’ or ‘climate-related’ to encompass a spectrum of weather and climate events: ‘from rapid-onset, short-duration extremes (e.g. a severe storm) to slow-onset, long-duration events (e.g. droughts and sea-level rise), whether these are entirely within natural variability or where they are thought to be a result of climate change, even if proper attribution analysis is lacking’ (Peters et al., 2020: 12). Owing to a lack of clarity within many literature sources about the rigour of climate analysis applied, this broad approach was deemed necessary. It should be noted, however, that ‘it is increasingly possible to ascertain whether, to some extent, a weather or climate event was influenced by anthropogenic climate change through appropriate climate change attribution analysis’ (Peters et al., 2020: 12). Therefore, over time it should be possible to become clearer about the specific inter-relationship between climate, climate change and protection risks.

Understanding the role of climate change as an indirect variable in conflict and humanitarian crisis settings is currently embryonic. There are exploratory ongoing efforts: for example, the Red

Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre is trying to better understand how climate change is altering rainfall extremes in some locations and contributing to the increased likelihood of landslides by interacting with underlying vulnerabilities (ICRC, 2020a). Pre-existing conflict related to land rights and tenure may displace people to steep, marginal areas to farm and live. As they clear vegetation from the slopes, the slopes become destabilised and prone to landslide in the event of heavy rainfall, potentially leading to further displacement. The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre's work also points to the need for more compound risk analysis, which includes climate projections, with particular attention to places affected by conflict. Such analysis would support protection actors to better integrate climate change into protection tools and approaches.

Given that climate change analysis relevant to protection risks is a relatively new area of focus, it is unsurprising that the climate community's terminology and language is generally not well understood by many protection experts. Both protection and climate are specialist fields, characterised by technical language, complex concepts and experts in law or science. There is a need for these expert communities to come together to inform how relevant information is accessed and analysed. Some organisations, such as the ICRC, have started to work on developing basic literacy for climate change, and there is a growing number of climate guides produced by climate experts that could be readily used or adapted for a humanitarian audience. Similar work needs to be undertaken on how protection risks are included in risk analysis, which incorporates climate change attribution analysis. To support this, upskilling of climate and disaster resilience experts is required in the field of protection (see section 4).

2 Protection risks in a climate-changed world

The magnitude and frequency of sudden-onset weather extremes is increasing globally. There was a nearly 700% increase in weather, climate and water-related disasters between 1970 and 2019 (WMO, 2021). These events have unequal effects. Twelve of the 20 countries estimated to be most vulnerable to climate-related events in 2020 were also suffering major humanitarian crises. Communities in conflict-affected contexts such as Yemen, Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic are vulnerable. They lack the required governance structures, systems and resources to manage and adapt to the effects of climate variability and change (WMO, 2021). In contexts already characterised by conflict and extremely high rates of internal and cross-border displacement, climate impacts compound the protection risks for people living in conditions of vulnerability where the means to adapt to climate changes are limited (see DRC, 2021).

Protection actors are increasingly recognising the need to better understand and respond to protection risks in a rapidly changing world. There is growing consensus that if climate change impacts are not addressed through effective mitigation and adaptation measures, existing protection risks will be exacerbated and new risks will be created in the years to come (PHAP, 2020).

2.1 The interplay between climate change and protection risks

Many protection risks are not new and are known to protection actors, but climate change is increasingly recognised as interacting with and exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities. Climate change can impact conflict dynamics, displacement patterns and access to services and resources in diverse ways, exacerbating existing protection risks while increasing the risk and impact of other drivers of conflict and fragility (DRC, 2021).

Existing protection risks related to access to and control over land, natural resources and livelihoods may be amplified by climate change, partly due to existing challenges of governance and fragility. As UNHCR states, these risks, in turn, ‘may threaten the enjoyment of the right to life; physical integrity; an adequate standard of living; health, water and sanitation; and self-determination and development, among other things’ (UNHCR, 2020). As such, climate-related changes in weather can increase vulnerability to violence and exploitation in a number of indirect ways. For example, in Burundi, access to and competition over land is a key driver of conflict across the country (Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre interview, 2021). Deforestation, land clearance for agriculture and insufficient governance of land use planning means that slope stabilisation is not happening where required (Kubwimana et al., 2021). Heavy rainfall over the course of a few hours or a couple of days can trigger hill collapse and landslides, leading to further displacement. Trend analysis of heavy rainfall in eight rain zones of East Africa in 1960–2017, including Burundi, does not yet show statistically significant changes in the intensity or frequency of such events (Ojara et al., 2021). Ongoing climate monitoring and analysis is needed to better understand how extreme rainfalls might shift under different climate change scenarios and the implications this could have for future landslide and displacement risk.

Pressure on livelihoods and access to resources can contribute to negative coping strategies. For example, in the semi-arid Lake Chad Basin and Liptako Gourma, water scarcity is being intensified by drought. With families struggling economically, incidences of child marriage are increasing as a coping mechanism, while women and girls are walking further distances to collect water, increasing their risk of assault (Save the Children, 2021). However, caution is needed – climate variability and change must not be unduly attributed as a new or main driver of conflict risk (see McCullough et al. (2019) for examples from Niger in this regard).

2.1.1 Climate change impacts and displacement

Sudden-onset weather extremes – some influenced by climate change – are increasingly interacting with, and becoming a driver of, displacement, including cross-border movements (UNHCR, 2018). Displaced populations are often the most politically, socially and economically marginalised in a specific context and thus are at risk of being settled by authorities to remote, marginal or contested land where livelihoods are difficult and/or where they may continue to be vulnerable to hazards such

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as flooding.¹ There is increasing recognition by operational agencies that simultaneous protection risks need to be addressed and that the changing frequency and intensity of hazards are an added complication. An example is the case of Cox's Bazar where conflict-displaced Rohingya from Myanmar are exposed to flooding in Bangladeshi settlements. Risks have been further exacerbated by Covid-19. Severe lockdown restrictions prevented aid actors from accessing the settlements and hindered the ability of Rohingya to move. This placed extreme restriction on their ability to access essential services, further compounding protection risks, as well as health risks including Covid-19. There are also strong differentiations in gender-based protection risks in this context. Furthermore, with Bangladesh exposed to sea-level rise, extreme events and increased vulnerability to cyclones (ICCCAD, 2014), climate change is contributing to myriad increased protection risks and harms related to food insecurity, malnutrition and health issues. DRC's climate resilience interventions are just one of many responses. These aim to improve livelihood options through a circular economy approach to economic development – meaning there is a focus on reusing resources and balancing the benefits to society, the environment and economy (see DRC, n.d.b).

Displacements can erode people's resilience and coping mechanisms. For example, Lebanon hosts more refugees relative to its population than any other country. Its complex socio-political context, protracted refugee situation and current economic crisis is further compounded by climate change impacts, a factor often overlooked, leading to simultaneous and overlaying crises. As Save the Children (2021) find: 'increasingly frequent and lengthening droughts are causing not only reduced rainfall, but a decrease in snow levels, compromising vital water sources. Rising sea levels are further causing saltwater intrusion into coastal groundwater. These climate change-induced strains combine with policy bottlenecks to negatively impact Lebanon's water supply. High demand of water for irrigation is already causing social tensions'.

Similarly, Afghanistan had more than a million IDPs due to natural hazard-related disasters at the end of 2019, more than any other country. Research funded by European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) (2020) found that 'the climate change predictions for Afghanistan reveal an increase in temperature that will have dramatic impacts on the country's agricultural production, water availability and food security'. Climate models suggest that Afghanistan will increasingly experience climate hazards related to drought and the associated impact of desertification and land degradation, with increased risk of flooding due to more rapid snowmelt. This, combined with factors such as land mismanagement and degradation as well as loss of vegetative cover, increases the impact of floods. The worsening climatic conditions are projected to 'negatively affect Afghanistan's socioeconomic development, increasing poverty, reducing food security, leaving more people vulnerable to climatic hazards and increasing the risk of conflict over natural resources.' Current estimates predict that the number of people affected by flooding in Afghanistan could double by 2050, causing further displacement (ECHO, 2020).

1 UNHCR considers that the violations incurred as a result of climate-related displacement may amount to persecution as defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention and may contravene the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement for internally displaced persons (IDPs) (OCHA, 2004, in Peters et al., 2021).

Protection in the context of climate and disaster risk management will also need to increasingly consider the limits of short-term protection measures. An example is the case of planned relocation as part of disaster risk management in Alaska, where protection in situ is not viable owing to climate-induced coastal erosion, permafrost collapse and floods. Here ‘protection measures have been ineffective in anything but the short term’, making planned relocations necessary (NRC and AIJ, 2017: 10). Securing human rights protections through community-based monitoring is one approach to ‘design and implement a relocation process that affirms the communities’ right to self-determination and ensures that their social and cultural rights are protected before, during and after they move’ (NRC and AIJ, 2017: 5). Lessons can be learnt from these approaches, not least that efforts are required to cost and assess the viability of future protections (NRC and AIJ, 2017).²

At times, people who are most vulnerable may be those who cannot move or are left behind – by choice or not. This has been found in Afghanistan, the Pacific and Mozambique (GPC, 2020; 2021; see section 2.1.4). To ensure the protection risks for immobile populations are considered, a detailed area-based context analysis of their specific needs and the barriers to movement they face is required.

2.1.2 Climate as an indirect driver of conflict

As protection actors are aware, hazards can contribute to higher levels of conflict due to impacts on contested natural resources and access to and viability of livelihoods. In Yemen, social and political tensions over resources have contributed to migration and increased conflict, while armed groups have reportedly used competition over natural resources and their impacts on livelihoods as a recruitment strategy (see Box 1; Lackner and Al-Eryani, 2020). Interviewees pointed to similar trends in Mali, Niger, Ethiopia and Sudan. While these trends are not new, they are further compounded by the impacts of climate change.

In such fragile and/or changing ecosystems, ill-timed or inappropriately considered humanitarian and development projects can increase risks of competition and confrontation over natural resources. For example, establishing water projects in certain areas might encourage settlement in contested areas or overgrazing of sensitive pasture lands. As the effects of climate change increase, they may further complicate deep-rooted historical grievances. In contexts such as Somalia and the Sahel, clan competition, ineffective governance, land grabbing and land degradation are making rainfed agriculture and pastoral livelihoods difficult, which can be further stressed during extremes. These can result in changing patterns of violence, conflict and displacement, potentially increasing the vulnerabilities of families left behind (ISS, 2018). Protection actors must consider even more carefully the potential of exacerbating such tensions through political economy analysis and ensuring protection measures are both climate-resilient and conflict-sensitive.

2 Other examples are available regarding planned relocation in West Africa (see IOM, 2018a).

Box 1 Environmental degradation as a strategy for conflict parties

State and non-state armed actors may fail to prevent the destruction of – or even purposefully destroy – natural resources or ancestral lands, which increases the vulnerabilities of particular groups (UNHCR, 2020; Peters et al., 2021). For example, in West Africa there are reports of armed groups destroying natural resources in areas of environmental degradation as a conflict strategy. This has significant consequences for populations in these locations – destroying livelihoods, and increasing competition over resources and access to services required for an adequate standard of living, thus potentially contributing to drivers of displacement.

Conflict parties can also force changes in movement patterns, which risks exacerbating violence – often linked to inter-communal violence. For instance, in West Africa a state actor reportedly stopped pastoralists passing through land they had historically accessed, thereby changing movement patterns. This led to increased interaction with other armed groups and communities, further competition over resources and escalating violence.

2.1.3 The impact of slow-onset shocks on protection risks

There is a gap in how humanitarian actors understand slow-onset climate-related impacts; these tend to receive less attention than sudden-onset shocks (Peters et al., 2021). This includes slow-onset droughts and long-term changes to an area's climate, such as increasingly hotter and/or drier summers. These conditions can contribute to deterioration in access to food as water resources and growing conditions for crops are altered, in turn potentially contributing to drivers of displacement, which can threaten people's lives and adequate standard of living (Peters et al., 2021).

Without continuous monitoring of trends in precipitation and temperature (sudden-onset extremes and slow-onset changes) and their impact on protection risks, humanitarian actors are ill-equipped to respond. Creeping changes can lead to acute crises that can catch humanitarian actors unprepared. For example, interviewees report that in Northern Kenya there is a growing trend of rural-urban/peri-urban migration among pastoralist groups. Many settle in peri-urban environments where they lack security of tenure and where livelihood options are poor. Interviewees suggest that although this trend has been taking place over years, it has been accelerated due to climate variability and change. Some humanitarian actors were unaware of this acceleration until traditional livelihoods were no longer viable and humanitarian needs were acute, resulting in reactive and late responses.

Protection actors must consider how to understand the factors contributing to people's decisions to move as well as the implications for those who remain in situ (either by choice or due to their inability to move) to ensure they can be proactive rather than reactive in nature. For example, an

interviewee reported positive examples in north-east Kenya and southern Ethiopia of development, humanitarian and conflict mitigation projects linking drought early warning indicators to early response and resilience interventions by organisations such as Oxfam and Farm Africa.

2.1.4 Climate change impacts and gender norms

Climate change impacts can compound gender-related risks. According to Habitat for Humanity, women are reported to own less than 15% of property globally, despite accounting for the majority of the agricultural labour force. Their precarious livelihoods and insecure land rights are further challenged when they are left behind by men who migrate for economic reasons linked to climate change. For example, Global Protection Cluster (GPC) interviews found that, in the Pacific, climate change contributes to economic migration particularly among men, as seasonal changes negatively affect livelihood choices and productive assets as well as competition over resources and challenges of land tenure. This puts women and families left behind at further risk, including the control they have over land due to issues of tenure (see Jalal, 2015).

Socio-cultural shifts can also take place, which can influence people's future capacities and vulnerabilities. For example, in Pakistan, high levels of male migration in the mountainous region led to women assuming responsibility for most of the work traditionally conducted by males. However, this led to some positive impacts toward women's empowerment, including women assuming decision-making roles as they took over businesses, more financial cooperatives and increased access to educational courses (Siegmann, 2010).

Such examples raise questions around how shifts in social norms, movement and urbanisation trends can be better anticipated and harnessed, while mitigating potential protection risks, such as the risk of violence, discrimination or coercion from groups who are negatively impacted by such shifts. Protection actors must better understand the impact of these interrelated factors in exacerbating protection risks and coping strategies, overlaid with intersectional differences such as age, gender and disability.

2.1.5 Unknown protection risks

While a 'threat multiplier' lens to understanding the impact of climate variability and change on protection risks is useful, there is also a requirement to consider the unknown risks or protection concerns in a specific context that are not 'magnified' or 'multiplied' but are newly emerging. For example, what are the potential severity and likelihoods of some climate change-related risks and how can we better understand the point at which people are no longer able to cope, and the factors contributing to that, from a protection perspective? To what extent could climate change impacts further complicate patterns of violence, conflict and displacement? How do we most effectively use data and risk analysis to anticipate protection risks, as opposed to solely focusing on the ones that are currently taking place? And how might transition risks (meaning transitioning

towards low carbon development pathways) impact our collective ability to ensure protection risks are minimised? These questions, among others, are beyond the scope of this paper but warrant further consideration.

2.2 Working towards improved evidence and understanding of climate change-related protection risks

A number of organisations have been working towards an improved analysis of protection risks related to climate change as it interrelates with the aforementioned combination of factors. However this is largely ad hoc, with a lack of comprehensive and systematic monitoring or evidence building. This undermines organisations' capacities to build joint understanding and analysis of the risks in order to identify priority actions to prevent and respond to them. There are questions around how the range of actors working on climate, protection and disasters can better work together to systematically monitor and document climate change-related protection risks.

Interviewees highlight the need to apply a resilience lens on how climate-related shocks impact protection risks. Conversely, there is a need for a climate lens on protection risk analysis. Together these will help ensure a nuanced understanding of protection risks related to both sudden-onset and slow climate change impacts. For example, the GPC's protection analytical framework has a category on natural hazards. But this should go further and consider the contribution of climate change for each protection risk. There is a lack of a common framework to understand how climate change exacerbates protection risks or creates new ones. Furthermore, the lack of clarity on terminology related to climate change-influenced protection risks and the humanitarians' lack of familiarity with climate change science has impeded comprehensive data collection and use.

In order to anticipate protection risks and impacts, it is of key importance that efforts to understand climate risks are contextualised. This requires in-depth analysis of the intersection of the range of risk factors at subnational, national and regional levels. Without this, it will not be possible to fully understand the varied protection risks within and across communities and the role that climate change impacts play on shifting these patterns of risk. In order to act in a conflict-sensitive manner, undertaking a detailed protection analysis using a climate hazard lens is imperative and will require early engagement of local analysts and national stakeholders. It will require protection actors to collaborate with climate scientists and experienced climate interlocutors who have the technical skills to know where to source and how to access and apply climate information at both regional and local levels. Partnerships with climate interlocutors are critical to ensure not only that climate information is understood in the right way, but also that any uncertainties or discrepancies in information are explained and taken into account by protection agencies. This is a role that the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre play for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, for example.

3 Operational and legal approaches to support the protection of people affected by climate change

3.1 Operational approaches

There are a lot of protection ‘knowns’ – about how people experience conflict and crises, their survival strategies and effective protection actions. Many of these may be suitable to adapt to new patterns of risk shaped by slow and sudden-onset hazards, including those influenced by climate change. However, there are also many gaps in evidence and analysis, operational approaches and legal considerations.

Operational approaches are not yet sufficiently developed to inform clear collective guidance or provide evidence of positive outcomes. To date, most agencies have focused on working towards policies and organisational commitments to aspects of climate change, as confirmed by the literature (see Box 2; UNDRR, 2019; Peters et al., 2021). This includes mitigation target policies around emissions or land use change, as well as making protection risks related to climate change a future strategy priority, and further research to better understand the current and future risks to protection mandates. In an effort to move the agenda forward, the GPC is developing guidance for their field protection clusters on preparedness for protection in the context of climate and disasters following a range of regional and national consultations.

Reflecting the reality that climate variability compounds and aggravates current impacts, practices tend to be repackaged, scaled up or nuanced for climate risks. Indeed, the senior expert consultation (2021) that informed this paper revealed that systems analysis to better understand the specificity of risks is required, rather than new approaches per se. That said, in some instances where the future viability of lives and livelihoods are called into question under certain climate scenarios, more specific and adapted interventions will be needed – such as planned relocation to deal with sea-level rise, as is the case for some of the Pacific islands.

Box 2 Protection agencies' engagement in climate change and displacement

Individual international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and UN agencies have drafted policies relating to climate change and protection.

The **Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**'s 2021–2025 'Framework on climate change and environment' (2021) is divided into three main pillars of action:

1. climate adaptation in programmatic responses;
2. mitigation to reduce their own environmental and climate footprint; and
3. advocating for people displaced by climate change.

Under the first pillar, DRC is mainstreaming climate and environment elements into its five core sectors (protection, economic recovery, shelter and settlements, camp coordination and camp management, and humanitarian disarmament and peacebuilding) as well as initiating flagship climate and environment projects.

An example of a flagship programme is permaculture-based design projects focusing on agroecology, agroforestry and passive water design in rural and urban farming in Burundi, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Yemen and other areas 'to support biodiversity, rebuild living soils, reduce and reuse waste, improve water management and build resilience to climatic shocks and stressors' (DRC, 2021: 9).

Under the third pillar, DRC is campaigning 'to ensure that the humanitarian impacts of climate change on displaced persons and host communities are both well understood and reflected in policy and practice including in budgetary allocations and that climate financing is proportional to the challenge – and that DRC is proactively contributing to on [sic] generating evidence of the nexus between climate change, conflict, environmental degradation and displacement' (DRC, 2021: 12).

Other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also included climate displacement in an integrated way, through addressing intersectional vulnerabilities (Peters et al., 2021):

- **CARE** (2020) is tackling climate displacement through gender-transformative adaptation and resilience-building.
- **World Vision** (2019) is committed to addressing issues of mass displacement and migration and climate change through bringing together humanitarian, development and peace actors.

- **Oxfam** (2019: 1) ‘is calling for more urgent and ambitious emissions reductions to minimize the impact of the crisis on people’s lives, and the establishment of a new “Loss and Damage” finance facility to help communities recover and rebuild’.
- **Norwegian Refugee Council** (NRC, 2019) includes those affected by conflict and climate change in their most recent global livelihoods and food security strategy, aiming to meet basic survival needs in the short term and to promote climate smart agriculture production practices in the long term.
- **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** has provided technical inputs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, is a member of the Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility and was involved in the UN’s Task Team on the Social Dimensions of Climate Change (Peters et al., 2021). In their ‘Outlook on migration, environment and climate change’, IOM lays out three strategic aims: empowering governments and authorities and enhancing the capacities of policy-makers and practitioners to address migration, environment and climate change matters; enabling and improving responses supporting migrants and vulnerable communities; and integrating human mobility matters into key policy areas (IOM, 2014).

Many of these organisations are involved in the **Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility**, including UNHCR, IOM, NRC and others. The group ‘brings together technical expertise from key UN agencies and international nongovernmental organizations. The Group is especially active in the context of the international negotiations under the UNFCCC, as it provides technical inputs in its various bodies and to negotiators’ (ibid.: 14).

Source: Adapted from Peters et al. (2021)

3.1.1 Protection and conflict prevention/management approaches

In contexts of intercommunal violence where climate change is compounding resource availability, operational agencies are increasingly recognising the need to adapt current approaches, or devise new ones, to take climate stressors into account. For example, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (2021) has adapted mediation approaches in the Sahel as part of their engagement in agro-pastoral mediation linked to resource scarcity. Other organisations such as ICRC and NRC have also been exploring adapted mediation approaches.

Integrating conflict early warning mechanisms with other early warning systems relevant to drought and extreme weather conditions to inform considerations of the climate and protection implications of complex crisis situations may offer some potential. An example is the African Union’s Continental Early Warning System, which, working with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West Africa Network for Peace, has been supporting the

development of gender-based violence indicators as early warning indicators for violence and social cohesion breakdowns. Many protection agencies believe that much more can be done in this regard to inform enhanced preparedness measures.

The importance of having the analytical capacity and partnerships necessary to access different data sets to proactively identify and analyse changing patterns of risk is increasingly being recognised. Only with a deeper understanding of evolving risks is it possible to devise preparedness and response plans to changing protection needs under different climate scenarios. Indeed, a lot of the focus at the UN Security Council level has resulted in efforts to improve climate analysis in UN field missions, including but not limited to action via the Climate Security Mechanism (UN DPPA, n.d.). It is critical that protection expertise is part of this mechanism so that protection considerations are considered in such analysis.

Reciprocal relationships will also need to be considered between climate change and protection expertise. For example, displacement often leads to new ways of life and changed consumption patterns, which in turn could alter carbon emissions, the use of natural resources, and environmental protection and degradation. This is seen, for instance, in the establishment of large-scale displacement camps, which frequently result in environmental destruction in the immediate surrounds due to high dependency on wood for consumption and shelter needs. For instance, in Uganda, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimates that between 2010 and 2018 there was a 14% increase of environmental degradation in refugee-hosting areas. This is linked to a significant refugee influx from South Sudan, exacerbating existing pressures on the environment due to increased demand for wood as cooking fuel (FAO, 2019).

More collaborative approaches to risk assessment need to be established. A comparative study on peace and conflict assessments found that while there were 66 different assessment tools focusing on climate change, natural resources and conflict, only two of these tools integrated all three dimensions. While there is much discussion of more integrated approaches to risk assessment, it appears that only a minority of peace and conflict assessment methodologies actually include environment and climate change (Peters and Vivekananda, 2014; Rütttinger et al., 2015). Further research is required to better understand whether this remains the case or if advances have been made over the past few years, as well as how protection agencies fare in relation to broader humanitarian risk assessments.

3.1.2 State-based approaches

States bear the primary responsibility for protecting their citizens. How they see climate risks facing citizens and what protection actions they take are an important contribution to this discussion but are yet to be fully explored. Protection actors have consistently recognised the importance of working with government stakeholders at national and subnational levels, and that long-term engagement is required if climate change and disaster-related protection risks are to be effectively addressed.

This means that state-led protection and conflict prevention approaches must be considered, as well as climate and disaster risk management approaches. Support to national and local actors should focus on systems-strengthening as well as response activities. This could include country and regional legal frameworks on displacement, cross-border movement, peacebuilding and conflict resolution agreements, national adaptation plans of action on climate change, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies.

Take DRR strategies as an example. The 193 Member States signatory to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction all committed to developing DRR strategies by 2020. In some regions – Africa and the Pacific for example – displacement and related protection risks are integrated most strongly into regional frameworks and subregional strategies, but in other regions this is more limited (Yonetani, 2018). There are opportunities to enhance the inclusion of natural hazard-related disaster protection risks and displacement (including from climate-influenced hazards) into regional and subregional strategies, and to be more explicit about their inclusion in national DRR strategies. At present 83% of national strategies make reference to protection risks related to human mobility through proxy terms, including evacuation, displacement, migration and cross-border movement. From a protection perspective, more could be done to move beyond a focus on evacuation and displacement preparedness, and instead strengthen the choices available to affected and at risk people, such as options for relocation or resettlement alongside post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery measures (Yonetani, 2018).

Beyond DRR, there is also a need for much stronger examination and analysis on what roles national and subnational authorities can play in managing and mitigating climate change-related risks in conflict-affected environments. More engagement is also needed regarding the responsibilities of third-party states to provide international protection to people who have crossed borders where climate has played a contributing or leading role in their displacement.

3.1.3 Disaster risk reduction

The protection implications of weather and climate-related hazards have brought to light the value of enhancing understanding, action and responsibility in applying a protection lens across a broader cadre of experts, including those concerned with addressing longer-term vulnerabilities and risk-informed development. For example, interviewees suggested that disaster displacement should not be primarily understood as a protection challenge, but rather a challenge that requires early, integrated programming between DRR, development, humanitarian and human rights actors, and (where relevant) peace actors. UNDRR's (2019) 'Words into action' guidelines on integrating displacement into DRR planning cycles is a good example of humanitarian agencies collaborating with the Platform on Disaster Displacement, IOM, UNHCR and others, to develop guidance and e-learning. Building on this, extending collaborations between disaster managers, climate expertise, protection specialists and peace and conflict specialists would be of value given the prevalence of natural hazard-related disasters in contexts of armed conflict and violence,

and the additional challenges this presents to government and non-governmental disaster risk management entities (Peters, 2019). Similar arguments have been made in regard to harmonising approaches to conflict and disaster displacement (see Weerasinghe, 2021).

It will therefore become increasingly important to ask questions around: what new protection risks may result from changing sudden-onset extremes to new climate patterns, particularly in conflict-affected contexts; what the protection implications are in contexts where the increased frequency of hazards is reducing recovery time; and how protection concerns for disaster-affected populations are being addressed through mainstream disaster risk management tools and approaches. Such inquiries will likely lead to further nuances. For example, a strong intersectional lens applied to these considerations could help reveal the differentiated vulnerabilities and impacts for people with disabilities, who suffer disproportionately from harmful gender norms, are excluded from decision-making or are underrepresented, excluded and marginalised.

3.1.4 Preparedness and anticipatory action

Enhanced preparedness and anticipatory action will also require development of climate change adaptation programming – which often still relies on generalised historical information about risks. Anticipatory action is triggered by forecasts of sudden-onset weather extremes and some seasonal slow-onset events such as drought; it is not dependent on climate change projections. Partnerships such as the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP, 2021) – which brings together humanitarian, climate and development experts with the aim of making ‘1 billion people safer from disaster by 2025’ – are seeking solutions to these challenges. Protection actors could get more involved, setting out how a protection lens is necessary for anticipatory climate action. This would be strategic in light of the hopes of increased climate funding being allocated globally leading up to 2025.

That said, given the limitations of current climate change adaptation financing for this agenda (see section 3.1.5), anticipatory action may provide a useful interim financing window. Early work on adapting anticipatory action to conflict contexts offers opportunities for a strengthened protection lens, including in contexts where armed conflict has increased vulnerability to climate change impacts, and where responses to weather and climate-related hazards are increasing vulnerability to violence and conflict. It may be feasible, for example, to utilise hydro-meteorological forecasts in conflict and displacement contexts to embed protection risks analysis to enhance early action. Equally it may be feasible to use forecasts of potential humanitarian consequences of conflict – such as food security and displacement – to integrate protection actions into forecast-based action (Wagner and Jaime, 2020). Although attention to date has been focused on the links to social protection systems, which are useful for realising human rights, a more explicit focus on the range of protection risks is required.

Further work is thus required to better understand how anticipatory action and early warning models can be applied to address vulnerabilities to protection risks, and the limits of these options. Given that the increased frequency and severity of climate change-influenced hazard events can translate into reduced recovery time for those impacted and at risk, this is of key importance. As a minimum, there is a need to explore what addressing protection risks for different hazards looks like in response to different triggers and where there are sufficient early warnings. Similarly, we need to explore how to make better use of conflict predictions to signal potential changes in people's exposure and vulnerability to hazards. This is especially crucial in areas highly exposed to weather and climate-related hazards, such as the camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (see section 2.1.1) or in the case of agropastoral populations. It is also important to explore how protection risk analysis can be linked to anticipatory action triggers and action to inform protection prevention and response approaches.

3.1.5 Climate change adaptation

Despite the complex relationship between climate change and conflict (see Peters et al., 2020), the interaction between climate changes and drivers of conflict such as diminishing natural resource availability, food insecurity, loss of biodiversity, diminished livelihood assets and infrastructure damage, all point to questions over whether climate change adaptation financing can address such challenges (Cao et al., forthcoming). To date, evidence of adaptation finance dedicated or spent in violent and conflict-affected contexts is limited, and multilateral climate funds and some bilateral donors tend to avoid such complex environments due to perceived higher spending risks and delivery challenges (ibid.). Efforts are underway to explore this further and to find ways forward for enhanced financing with positive outcomes for climate and conflict (ibid.). Protection has so far not been part of these conversations but could be, with more active engagement of protection experts.

There is hope that climate change adaptation actions can play a positive role in responding to protection risks, if the necessary collaborations, advocacy and practical ideas can be garnered on what this would entail. For example, calls have been made for climate-resilient adaptation to be integrated into multi-year humanitarian and protection interventions, and for Climate, Environment and Conflict Action Plans to be scoped and delivered to tackle tripartite relationships (see Peters et al., 2021). To develop such ideas, an examination will need to be undertaken on: the extent to which different types of protection analysis and actions are directly and indirectly embedded within national and subnational climate change adaptation strategies and action plans; responsibilities and resources for their implementation; and the viability of enhancing those commitments to address any identified gaps in context-specific ways.

To achieve this, protection actors can benefit from the positive trend seen over the past few years wherein climate actors are increasingly looking to collaborate with others outside their area of expertise. This has been the case, for example, in relation to the co-production of climate services

tailored to specific sectors and user groups (Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre interview, 2021). In short, a growing number of climate specialists are keen to engage with the protection community; this should be harnessed.

Some existing guidance may be useful for considering climate change adaptation–protection links. For example, principles for success in integrating gender and security in climate adaptation have been produced, building on research in Myanmar, Mali, Lebanon and Jordan (International Alert, 2021). Two of the principles focus on gender transformation and on the interaction between development and humanitarian interventions and the environment. Such guidance notes provide useful starting points from which more explicit links can be made between the prevention and response to climate change-related protection risks and impacts.

Applying human rights protections, including self-determination and empowerment, can also be motivated through indigenous-led tools, something encouraged as part of efforts to decolonise climate adaptation research (Bronen and Cochran, 2021). Examples from the Alaska Native Science Commission and Inuit Circumpolar Council are noteworthy in this regard, as is the encouragement of the coproduction of knowledge and community-based environmental monitoring (ibid.). Applying such decolonising tools to contexts where rising sea-level risk and extreme weather events are raising questions about the limits of in-situ protection, such as in low lying Pacific Islands, could help to avoid repeating negative historical experiences of state-driven forced relocations.

3.1.6 Stress testing relevant models

Operational agencies are concerned about the likely protection risks faced as a result of ‘unknown’ interactions between climate change and other socioeconomic–cultural–political conditions. These include, but are not limited to, displacement triggers and drivers and changing conditions of conflict (Peters et al., 2021). To demystify and enable a pragmatic approach to this challenge, agencies are making efforts to stress test existing protection approaches, with the aim of seeing how they fare under different climate scenarios and situations, and whether current systems are able to cope when exposed. By way of an example, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre aim to do more work on stress testing in the future.

In a similar vein to arguments put forward in a recent NRC and ODI report, the idea that ‘the displacement outcome is arguably of greater importance than the specific climate factor’ (Peters et al., 2021: 10) has resonated with many agencies who would prefer to focus on the consequences rather than the causes of the protection–climate intersection. They could then centre their efforts on how to mitigate threats and enhance mechanisms to trigger protection actions.

In contexts such as East Africa, some experts are finding the framing of ‘habitability’ particularly useful and relevant for discussions on sustainability, protection, preparedness for return or new destinations, and questions over what constitutes durable solutions. Habitability brings to the fore the notion that hazards such as droughts and floods are shaped by climate variability and change,

and are just two elements alongside a number of other variables, such as land degradation and destruction of the ecosystems, that shape the physical and environmental conditions in which people live. Intervention innovations that seek to enhance agro-biodiversity through citizen engineering, for example, may be useful to restore water and food security as well as biodiversity and thus deal with the adverse impacts of climate changes. There are examples of such approaches. DRC are supporting agroecosystem restoration in Uganda in an effort to combat extreme climate and weather events as well as economic shocks (FSN Network, 2021). Meanwhile, in Burundi, DRC interventions aim to tackle flooding and extreme weather events through soil restoration, rebuilding hydrological health and enhancing biodiversity (DRC, 2020).

In other cases, it may be that people's resilience has been depleted. Protection agencies need to be better prepared and utilise insights from those working on supported migration and relocation (see earlier in briefing note for examples).

3.2 Legal frameworks

In October 2020, UNHCR issued guidance on the 'applicability of the international protection regime in the context of cross-border climate change and disaster displacement' focused in particular on the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, 2020: 3). This found that the Refugee Convention can provide a basis for international protection in certain situations, but that protections are too narrow and ill-equipped to deal with the potential impacts of climate change or disasters on socioeconomic and political vulnerabilities, altered state-society relations, individual well-being and the attainment of rights (Peters et al., 2021; UNHCR, 2020). This means that, in some situations, people who cross borders due to climate-related factors may be recognised as refugees, but many will not. It also means that many of their resulting needs, or their ability to claim rights, may not be addressed.

Legal experts recognise that broader legal protections under human rights law should be explored further, such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) or the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which may be relied upon more in the future for litigation and advocacy. Regional and national laws and frameworks should also be assessed and used. However, the limited political and public appetite for expanding the applicability of these legal instruments to new categories of at risk populations must also be recognised.

Current use of legal frameworks are not only narrow in scope but also applicable too late. Under the Refugee Convention, protection relates to events that have already taken place and therefore does not help prevent the original violation that gave rise to flight. Early analysis of potential violations of rights and applicable legal frameworks will be required, potentially years in advance. This requires a mindset shift for protection organisations to anticipate and prepare for evolving protection risks. One example of such an approach is being led by the Government of Vanuatu, which has, for some years, been exploring legal action as a tool to address the current and future impacts of climate change-related loss and damage (see Wewerinke-Singh and Salili, 2019).

While this was previously stalled, in part due to pressures from other states, there are recent indications that ahead of COP26 the Government of Vanuatu will coordinate efforts for states in the Pacific Islands and other interested states to ask the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on the rights of present and future civilians to be protected from the adverse consequences of climate change (see Briscoe, 2021). Further developments include recognition from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that having a healthy environment is a human right, as reflected in resolution 48/13. A second resolution (48/14) reflected the UNHRC's commitment to focus on the human rights impacts of climate change by establishing a Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change (UNHRC, 2021).

The ICRC has also been analysing legal frameworks relevant to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the environment. It recently updated its guidelines on the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict, recognising this as an area of law that is overlooked. It clarifies the environment as a civilian object that is protected by IHL, acknowledging that when the environment is harmed, so too is community resilience (ICRC, 2020b). There are opportunities for humanitarian actors to better promote these relevant areas of law.

4 Looking forward: priority actions required to strengthen a climate-sensitive lens for protection actors

4.1 Looking ahead

While various organisations are currently thinking about what is required to prevent and respond to climate change-related protection risks, and some early pilots are taking place to test approaches, there remains a significant gap in evidence and analysis to inform prevention and response approaches.

Some behavioural changes will also be required. Specifically, work remains to be done to overcome hesitancy or even resistance among some protection experts to engage climate specialists and address the protection–climate interplay. The former may fear a dilution of the protection agenda linked to the perception that climate impacts are not considered at the core of specialist protection agencies and mandates, particularly for those who focus on conflict. The latter can be reticent to engage in what are still sometimes viewed as issues of concern for humanitarians alone; although with sufficient links made to the Loss and Damage discussions within the UNFCCC, there is scope to enhance engagement from climate mitigation and

adaptation experts, particularly in relation to ‘human mobility’ (IOM, 2018b). Empirical examples of this intersection will need to be documented as part of broader efforts to create more opportunities for specialists in both fields to understand the links and develop joint analysis and practical operational responses.

There is also a need to upskill humanitarian, protection and conflict specialists in climate change, and climate change specialists in protection, to lay the foundations required for effective collaborative working. Existing tools can also be adapted and used more widely. For example, the Environment and Humanitarian Action Network (EHA) is a multi-agency collaboration that developed, among other things, the Nexus Environment Assessment Tool (NEAT+) and rapid environmental impact assessments to inform humanitarian programming and bring together environmental and humanitarian actors (EEC, 2021).

There is a move within development, climate and, to an extent, humanitarian action to adopt risk-informed approaches to reduce longer-term vulnerabilities (Opitz-Stapleton et al., 2019). Such approaches remain challenging in practice; however, if they are achieved, protection actors will be in a better position to address protection risks linked to climate change impacts, including through pre-emptive action to mitigate, reduce and prepare for intersecting risks. It has also been reported that donors are increasingly looking to encourage or require agencies to better integrate climate considerations into the design and delivery of their programmes. Protection agencies need to be ready to respond to this call and, ideally, inform the design of what is required of them. This will ensure climate considerations go beyond mitigation (although this is an important contribution) and support positive protection outcomes in a changed climate – regardless of whether those interventions are led by climate, protection, humanitarian, development, disaster or peace expertise, or preferably, through joint leadership.

4.2 Recommendations

Given the complexity of the topic, enhanced recommendations must derive from more in-depth and context-specific analysis. What is outlined below is therefore an initial set of ideas that we hope will prompt accelerated action on this topic.

4.2.1 Evidence, analysis and partnerships

- Enhancing the evidence base, quality of analysis and capacity of protection experts to interrogate the protection–climate links will necessarily require new partnerships that bring together expertise on protection and climate. To aid interdisciplinary collaboration, at least a sub-set of protection actors within each agency need to become climate literate – and vice versa. As part of their personal and organisational development, protection experts must be supported to obtain foundational knowledge on climate change. This should include basic concepts and terminology related to climate change mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, the history and politics of climate negotiations, the basics of climate change

attribution science, and the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) findings. This could be achieved through collaboration with academic institutes with expertise in climate, or through utilising existing resources. For example, free online courses on climate change are available through the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). Similarly, free online tutorials are available on understanding the latest findings from the IPCC reports, and on communicating climate change, among other topics, from the Climate & Development Knowledge Network (CDKN).³ Only by gaining foundational climate knowledge will it be possible for protection experts to more effectively understand how to collaborate with climate experts, and integrate a climate lens into protection analysis tools and programming approaches.

- Taking steps to enhance protection actors' understanding of the basic terminology and concepts of climate change is necessary groundwork for encouraging and ensuring commonly agreed climate-related terminology across protection agencies. Subsequently, knowledge is needed to apply this consistently when analysing and communicating the impact of climate variability and change on protection risks. Partnerships and collaboration between protection and climate experts is required, for example through the community of practice (recommended in section 4.2.2) to initiate such a process. It should be noted that no new climate terminology will be required – this already exists in scientifically and politically agreed documents related to the IPCC – but the application in the context of protection issues is something that needs to be considered.
- Depending on the mandate and expertise of different protection agencies it may be valuable to consider establishing collaborations with existing climate networks for the purposes of joint analysis, advocacy, policy development, programme design and monitoring. For example, making links to the Climate Action Network (CAN)⁴ would be one way to collaborate on protection issues, by linking with the CAN theme of 'centering people and climate impacts', or similarly by integrating protection risks into national policy through their work on transformative national climate action plans.
- Partnerships will need to be established between protection agencies and climate experts in order to adapt existing protection tools and frameworks such as protection risk analysis tools. This includes the GPC protection analysis framework, as well as conflict analysis tools in order to sufficiently include data and analysis on climate variability and change. The specific changes required will depend on the nature of the tool in question but could include systematic inclusion of climate and hazard data into analysis, the integration of climate change adaptation pathways into protection interventions and programme design, and/or climate change impacts and environmental degradation monitoring as part of protection monitoring, evaluation and learning processes.
- There is a need to systematically document the intersection of climate change and changed protection risks over a range of temporal and geographical scales. This should be done collaboratively – utilising interdisciplinary teams, and in a holistic manner – taking heed of the

3 https://cdkn.org/about/?loclang=en_gb

4 <https://climatenetwork.org/>

reality that the climate is just one of a number of environmental factors occurring within any given context, and that any changes to climate or protection risks and impacts need to be situated in a broader socioeconomic–political context. Similarly, data collection and analysis should look at not only displacement and mobility but also populations that remain in situ. Evidence of this kind could help pivot protection actors away from a focus on responses to displacement incidents and towards a more balanced approach, one that considers those most vulnerable to climate change impacts from a protection perspective. As with any process, communities must be involved in the preparedness, planning and implementation phases, to encourage and support localisation.

- In partnership, governments, protection agencies and climate experts could work towards putting frameworks and mechanisms in place to identify anticipatory triggers for climate-related protection risks and the means to measure indicators of increased protection risks, establish links to early warning systems, and prepare action plans to mobilise action as required. To achieve this, risk analysis and management will need to mature sufficiently to differentiate between and better understand the role of climate-influenced events on protection risks. This will require detailed risk and attribution analysis of protection with a climate lens and vice versa. The potential changes in socio-cultural shifts linked to climate should be considered as well as how they influence future capacities, vulnerabilities and resilience. It will require protection actors to review the application of early warning systems for climate-related shocks and seek ways to incorporate a protection lens to early warning systems. Continental and regionally based partnerships would be well suited to piloting such innovations, as well as connections at the global level, for example through the GPC and REAP, START Network and others.
- Work closely with national and subnational governments to ensure a protection lens is applied to relevant national frameworks such as National Adaptation Plans of Action on climate change, DRR strategies, and other relevant preparedness and response frameworks. This could be taken forward through, for example, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), clusters and/or working groups where relevant stakeholders participate, for example nexus working groups or fora. There are opportunities to use such platforms to set an example by bringing together technical expertise on climate, disasters, protection, humanitarian, peace and conflict, to devise common messaging for context-relevant protection considerations that can then be taken forward in different national and subnational policy and convening spaces. Subnational engagement will be particularly important in decentralised and devolved political contexts where state and subregional plans and policies will be more influential on local-level action.

4.2.2 Operational approaches

- A community of practice specifically on climate change and protection should be established to provide space for agencies to share operational tools and lessons and to collaborate on innovative design approaches that offer opportunities to address the interplay between climate change risks and impacts, and protection. This could be housed within the ICRC/

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) or GPC, or as part of existing collaborative arrangements, or something completely new. Either way, the community should intentionally include protection, humanitarian, legal, climate, development, peacebuilding and disaster specialists, allowing for a cross-disciplinary dialogue space in which to advance thinking and action.

- A set of pilot country-based assessments should be designed and undertaken that map current and future protection risks resulting from climate interactions with country conditions, and state and non-state responses (including an assessment of current commitments under displacement, peacebuilding, and climate and disaster policies and strategies). The objective would be to identify the gap between current provision and capacity, and to shape a set of concrete ideas as to what preparedness and preventative measures are required to anticipate and mitigate future protection risks.
- A collaboration between the protection agencies and UNDRR should seek to better understand the current level of evidence, capacity and capability to identify and enact pre-emptive measures to take account of protection risks in hazard-prone contexts. This could be used to scale up capacity building and action through national disaster risk governance architecture (depending on the country in question). This may include, for example, adjustments to DRR strategies, a standing agenda item in the National DRR Platform agenda, inclusion in Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) capacity-building plans (where they exist), and (I)NGO, civil society organisation (CSO) and Red Cross Red Crescent disaster risk priorities and plans. Examples of good practice could be featured in the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022 in Indonesia.
- Protection agencies, and/or the community of practice (recommendation outlined above) should seek to form a strategic relationship with the UN Climate Security Mechanism to ensure that protection risks are systematically considered as part of the UN's approach to climate change in the context of conflict and security. Relatedly, knowledge exchange gained from such a relationship, it is hoped, could help ensure that conversations within the UN Climate Security Mechanism are grounded in protection agencies' operational experiences.
- Protection agencies, and/or the community of practice should continue to engage and seek further input with the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) Executive Committee around Action Area 6 on Migration, Displacement and Human Mobility under the WIM. Questions of human mobility in the face of climate change are considered in the WIM and being raised by Small Island States as part of the Loss and Damage negotiations under the UNFCCC.
- Informal collaborations could also be formed with those agencies interested in exploring and enhancing climate change adaptation financing flows to conflict contexts, ensuring that any such efforts take into account protection risks, evidence and expertise. Similarly, protection specialists collaborating with REAP could help encourage inclusion of protection priorities, language and ideas in future advocacy efforts.
- A substantive financial investment is required to enable exploratory work to be undertaken to bring together anticipatory action, early warning models and ideas on preparedness and pre-emptive action. This would achieve more comprehensive responses to warnings, triggers

and future scenarios of risks where climate change is a factor and protection harms are a likely outcome. A portfolio of work in this field could include extending and broadening the analysis being undertaken by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre to stress test existing models to assess how existing protection approaches fare under different climate scenarios; another could include stress testing the effectiveness of climate change adaptation pathways when compounded by different protection harms (from non-climate-related causes such as conflict). Similarly, research is required to better understand, and adapt as required, protection monitoring processes and tools to take account of the role of climate and environmental changes. Furthermore, such research could look into how these processes and tools compare and could combine with those being used by climate experts to enable a more holistic picture to be garnered of current and projected risks and vulnerabilities – and to inform future prioritisation of resources and action.

4.2.3 Legal considerations

- Strengthen analysis and use of national, regional and international human rights frameworks and treaty bodies. This could include joint analysis across protection actors of human rights frameworks relevant to current and future climate change-related protection risks. Document existing litigation efforts using human rights treaties that provide examples of the use of human rights instruments and how they are evolving in relation to rights abuses linked to climate change.
- Ensure early analysis of potential violations of rights and legal frameworks that may be applicable, particularly among organisations involved in advocacy or litigation. This requires a mindset shift for protection organisations to allow them to anticipate and prepare for future violations, paving the way for early action when protection risks arise.

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