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A photograph of a family walking through floodwaters in the rain. A man in a yellow shirt holds a red umbrella over a woman in a purple vest and a young girl in a colorful patterned dress. They are wading through murky water. The background is a blurred city street with buildings and a car.

The impact of climate change and displacement on the right to education

A UNESCO initiative



What is our aim?

Given the increasing impact of climate change on human mobility, UNESCO launched in 2020 a global initiative to investigate the barriers to education posed by climate change directly, as well as climate-driven displacement, taking into account the policy implications thereon.

The aim of this initiative is to provide operational policy recommendations for policy makers globally which help ensure the right to education in national and regional systems for persons affected by climate change, followed by capacity building and technical support to States.

The context

In 2019, 24.9 million people were internally displaced as a result of disasters. 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. *

* *Date source:* Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/> and
<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/>

The challenge

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 information on the specific linkages between climate change, displacement **and the right to education**.

Climate-affected persons face a number of barriers to education, including:



Schools
destroyed
by floods



Climate-induced
poverty and
dropout



Language
barriers upon
displacement



Trauma and
discrimination

How is UNESCO addressing this challenge?

To investigate the barriers to education resulting from climate change and displacement and help build resilient, inclusive, and rights-based education systems, UNESCO's initiative takes a three-step approach:

1

A policy paper

- Literature review and general recommendations
- Published in 2020

2

Regional research

- Country case studies and regional reports on Asia & the Pacific, Latin America & the Caribbean, East Africa, and Southeast Europe in 2022

3

Global synthesis report

- Summarizing regional trends and providing operational policy recommendations for policy makers forthcoming in 2023

Learn more at:

<https://www.unesco.org/en/education/right-education/climate-change-displacement>



Some findings

- Climate change **exacerbates existing educational inequalities for the most vulnerable**, including those in poverty, women & girls, refugees, ethnic minorities, the disabled, etc.
- Climate-induced poverty, particularly in rural areas and the agricultural sector, **leads to dropout** for economic pursuit.
- Much of what is thought to be economic migration is actually **climate-driven migration**.
- Disaster risk reduction policies/legislation do **not take into account educational continuity in post-disaster responses**.
- Even upon internal displacement, children can face **language barriers and administrative discrimination**.
- Climate displaced persons remain politically **invisible and absent in national policies**.

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.



The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



Stay in touch



UNESCO
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris France



righttoeducation@unesco.org



Read more
<https://www.unesco.org/en/education/right-education/climate-change-displacement>

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