IT’S TIME FOR US TO BE INCLUDED

An Assessment of Refugee and Displaced People’s Participation in National Adaptation Planning

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About Refugees International

Refugees International advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises around the world. We do not accept any government or UN funding, ensuring the independence and credibility of our work.

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Executive Summary

States are making progress in planning their responses to climate change. The crucial documents that set country strategies—National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)—map out important steps and policies on how to prepare for the effects of climate change. However, refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are regularly overlooked in these plans. This is a mistake. These populations are among those most vulnerable to climate change, but have limited opportunities for independent adaptation: they have few assets, are often located in undesirable areas, and face restrictions on movement and access to work. When exposed to climate hazards, refugees and IDPs are therefore at uniquely high risk.

Given the vulnerability of these populations, adaptation plans should explicitly consider their needs and should contain concrete commitments to build their resilience to shocks. This can only be adequately achieved by consulting displaced people during the NAP processes. Indeed, displaced populations will know their needs better than outside observers, and are also prone to being overlooked if not deliberately brought into discussions.

This brief examines NAPs and considers whether refugee and IDP populations are included as participants during formulation of plans and as beneficiaries. It finds that displaced populations are seldom adequately included in NAPs. Importantly, the lack of inclusion is not homogeneous. IDPs are often recognized to need support, and a number of NAPs make concrete commitments to do so in different ways. Refugees, by contrast, are rarely even mentioned in NAPs. This is a crucial omission: NAPs are the blueprint for pan-governmental adaptation programming, and also steer climate finance towards projects. Without refugees’ inclusion in NAP processes, their vulnerability is likely to go unremarked and unaddressed.

The omission of refugees from NAPs is not wholly surprising. A large proportion of displaced people are hosted in countries considered highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as Chad and Kenya. These countries struggle to sufficiently support their own citizens, and may deprioritize support for refugees. Around 70 percent of people internally displaced by conflict or violence are also hosted in countries considered highly vulnerable to climate change.

While facing these restrictions and difficult living conditions, many IDPs and refugees are also unable to formally work in their host communities or countries. This is especially the case for refugees, who may de jure have the right to work but remain de facto excluded from the labor market. They may face barriers to obtain work permits, access bank accounts, or obtain certifications needed for certain professions. Dependence on external provision of basic supplies leaves displaced populations...
with few adaptation options. These groups are also unable to move freely, reducing their ability to evade sudden- or even slow-onset climate shocks. This is a major and under-considered problem: camps are often located in hazard-exposed areas of hazard-exposed countries, and may increasingly lack water, be exposed to floods or landslides, and have few local opportunities for increasing refugees’ self-reliance through agriculture or other sustainable livelihoods.

To assess the state of this gap and as part of Phase II of the Let Them Work Initiative, Refugees International analyzed 44 NAPs¹ to determine the extent to which refugees and IDPs participated in their development, were included in vulnerability analysis, and/or if their projects or provisions targeted refugees or displaced people.²

The timing is crucial, and the stakes, for millions of people across the world, could not be higher. There are some critical steps that can make a difference. For their part, national governments must include IDPs and refugees as key stakeholders in the development of NAPs throughout the design process and all the way through implementation. Donor countries and aid agencies can also insist on the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in vulnerability assessments and consultations throughout NAP development. They can also increase climate adaptation financing for fragile and conflict-affected states, which should include investment in local actors and access to climate-resilient labor market activities.

¹ See Appendix A.
² In this brief, RI has made the choice to assess both refugees and displaced people, although each group may have different advantages or needs. For instance, IDPs are citizens of a country, and as such, may have more of a claim in being a part of official adaptation processes. However, many NAPs do not make hard distinctions between refugees and displaced people, and it is unclear how much this is driven by political decisions to not classify certain populations, including those displaced by climate change, as official “refugees.”
Recommendations

For national governments developing NAPs:

• IDPs and refugees must participate as key stakeholders in their development from the start and consulted throughout the process of design and implementation. Governments should consult with displaced populations to understand their needs and ideas, and conduct risk assessments in areas where displaced populations reside. This should surface these groups’ unique vulnerabilities to climate change to be addressed in the final NAP content. Governments should also be transparent about how input from displaced populations is incorporated.

• NAPs should identify IDPs and refugees as beneficiaries, ensuring that they are supported in adapting to the effects of climate change alongside other populations and included in any planning for climate-driven relocation and resettlement.

• NAPs must also consider whether climate change will lead to increased displacement within a country or across its borders, and how these populations will be supported.

• Track refugee and IDP inclusion in NAP implementation progress with concrete, disaggregated, and time-limited indicators to make visible the extent to which refugee and IDP populations are benefitting from adaptation programming and financing. This responsibility will fall with whichever government entities are responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

• Learn from and amplify lessons from broader calls for refugee participation. This includes the Global Refugee-led Network’s guide on meaningful refugee participation.

• NAP processes should be coordinated with wider development planning to foster the economic inclusion of refugees and other displaced groups.

Countries that have already developed NAPs should:

• Make clear how refugees and IDPs may participate and be included in adaptation planning moving forward. In particular, countries should extend relevant adaptation actions across all populations, including refugees and IDPs, even where not explicitly stated in current NAPs. They must also consult with these populations in revising NAPs for future iterations. Without refugees or IDP
inclusion, any adaptation efforts would be missing large parts of their country that need adaptation support the most.

Donors and aid agencies supporting NAP development, including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), should:

• Urge countries to include refugees and IDPs within their vulnerability assessment and participation processes. This is particularly salient for countries with large populations of refugees and IDPs, many of which have not yet completed their NAPs.

• Increase climate adaptation financing for fragile and conflict-affected states. NAP implementation in fragile countries, especially those with large refugee or IDP populations, will be heavily dependent on donor support.

• Ensure that with greater financing comes greater oversight of inclusion of refugees and other displaced people. States will be much more likely to engage with and focus on climate change adaptation efforts for refugee and/or IDPs if donors create incentives to do so. One way is through dedicated financing for such efforts, much like those provided by the World Bank’s Window for Host Communities and Refugees. This sort of funding mechanism has enabled states to integrate refugees and/or IDPs into broader development planning—the next natural step is to ensure this also covers climate change adaptation efforts within such planning.
Background

What are National Adaptation Plans?

National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are the primary instrument through which the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) supports adaptation to climate change in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other developing countries. These identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs according to vulnerabilities to climate change and set out national and subnational strategies for addressing them. These strategies are essential to states’ responses to increasing climate shocks and must integrate all segments of their populations. Various mobile populations are increasingly included in NAPs; refugees, however, are often overlooked even in countries hosting large numbers.

The NAP process was formally established in 2011 under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, as an outcome of the Conference of the Parties (COP) 16 in 2010. During the NAP process, national governments assess current and future climate impacts, as well as their vulnerabilities to those impacts. In this way, they can begin to identify and prioritize adaptation options, make a plan to implement these options, and ultimately track progress. At the same time, the NAP process is meant to center adaptation within a country’s development planning process, ensuring that it is mainstreamed within larger practices rather than an ad hoc exercise.

Figure 1: NAP Process Evolution. Source: NAP Global Network
As of March 23, 2023, 44 of the 129 developing countries that have undertaken the NAP process had submitted NAP drafts to the official NAP Central database. These formed the basis of Refugees International’s data analyzed for this report. Of these 44 NAPs, 35 mention mobility in some form, and nine do not mention mobility at all. Many of those that do mention mobility do not contain concrete relevant policy commitments. Almost no NAPs differentiate between IDPs and refugees.

How are NAPs developed and funded?

While the National Adaptation Plan is a single document, its preparation is intended to involve a wide variety of actors, and to be a milestone in a broad process of adaptation mainstreaming. The NAP process is expected to help countries develop the systems and capacities necessary for adaptation to be a core component of their development planning and budgeting practices. In this way it is meant to bring adaptation into all activities rather than treating it as a compartmentalized practice.

The UNFCCC suggests that NAPs are intended to be:

- A plan outlining what is known about a country’s vulnerability, and setting forth adaptation actions prioritized within set timeframes;

- A policy instrument, coordinating all actors and stakeholders and driving actions; and

- Supported by a process made up of observation; research; analysis; assessment; priority-setting; planning; implementation; reporting; monitoring; review; and evaluation.

NAP preparation processes are typically led by the Ministry of the Environment in a given country (see Appendix B for more on the process). A number of countries have also been supported by external actors in preparing their NAPs. The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), for example, supported Bangladesh in preparing its NAP between 2019-2022, at a cost of EUR3 million. The agency has also worked with Benin, Burkina Faso, and Senegal, assisting the governments in undertaking vulnerability analyses, fundraising, and capacity-building.

The Global Support Programme (NAP-GSP), managed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Program from 2013-2021, has been particularly important in supporting the development of numerous NAPs in 60 developing countries. The NAP-GSP assisted countries in convening workshops; forming NAP Secretariats and multi-sectoral NAP teams; undertaking pre-NAP stocktakes of policies and information gaps; mobilizing climate finance; and conducting analysis. From 2016-2020 the NAP-GSP supported 37 non-Least
Developed Countries (LDCs) in advancing their NAP processes, and assisted 22 non-LDCs in accessing around US$55.4 million to support NAP planning.

Funding for NAPs can be obtained through the Readiness Programme, operated by the Green Climate Fund, which can provide developing countries with up to US$3 million to support planning processes. Other countries have received direct funding through bilateral support: the development of Fiji’s NAP, for example, was supported by the United States and the International Institute for Sustainable Development; and Tanzania’s was funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Why do refugees and IDPs need specific inclusion in NAP processes?

There are multiple reasons for the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in NAP processes. First, many countries that host refugees or that are sites of internal displacement are particularly vulnerable to climate change. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), “…roughly 90 percent of refugees come from countries that are the most vulnerable and least ready to adapt to the impacts of climate change. These countries also host around 70 percent of people internally displaced by conflict or violence.” Many refugee camps are located in climate “hot spots,” facing greater exposure to weather shocks. Within hazard-exposed countries, camps may also be more likely to be located in particularly hazard-exposed areas. Across East Africa, more than six hundred thousand refugees are located in camps in areas disproportionately exposed to weather shocks when compared to the average host country border site. Beyond simple exposure, camps are also especially vulnerable: they are usually constructed from temporary building materials, and their systems for managing waste, water, and healthcare may be easily disrupted. In Sudan, for example, 63,000 Ethiopian refugees who arrived between November 2020 and April 2021 saw more than half their shelters destroyed by severe weather conditions, including heavy rains, large floods, storms and heat waves, and the destruction of thousands of camp latrines leading to Hepatitis E outbreaks. In Syria, three-quarters of IDP camps have drainage infrastructure inadequate for the winter rains, increasing vulnerability to flooding, and inadequate water storage for summer droughts, causing shortages of drinking water.

Refugees and IDPs have specific vulnerabilities that need to be addressed. Prospects for overcoming climate-related shocks are diminished for refugees and displaced people because of limited access to cash and/or employment opportunities. For example, in 2014, the World Bank estimated that seven out of ten Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon could be considered poor based on UNHCR’s assistance threshold. This increases to nine in ten refugees if the poverty lines of each host country are used. In comparison, during this same time, three out of ten Jordanians lived in poverty. In
addition, when refugees or IDPs participate in the formal labor market, they are often employed in the agricultural sector, which is highly vulnerable to climate shocks. When refugees participate in small-holder agriculture, they often own fewer assets, such as land, and grow a less diverse range of crops, making it harder to adapt to climate-related shocks. Climate change adaptation efforts will need to ensure that refugees and IDPs have access to more climate-resilient and diverse sources of income.

Likewise, refugees often have significantly lower adaptive capacity than IDPs because of limited access to capital and restrictive government policies. They therefore require targeted support in responding to hazards. Frequently, however, host countries’ policies directly contribute to increasing refugees’ vulnerability, and refugees’ needs are not recognized in their NAPs. Without their future participation in NAP processes, this is unlikely to change. For example, in Bangladesh, refugees and other displaced groups face unique vulnerabilities in the climate-health nexus as a result of the restrictions on their movement: when landslides and floods threaten camps, they are unable to move away. In Rwanda, refugees are located in remote areas with less productive land and higher risk of extreme weather events such as flooding. NAP processes in countries hosting large numbers of refugees, or which may host refugees in the future, should therefore include provisions relating to refugee hosting. This should include an acknowledgement that future refugee camp placement should take exposure to weather hazards into account.

Processes should also include pledges to support adaptation initiatives for current refugee populations, including allowing refugees in hazard-exposed areas to move to safer environments; increased access to work for refugees, and support in making livelihoods resilient to climate shocks; and resilience-building initiatives in refugee camps, such as green infrastructure improvements, which take into account legal restrictions placed on refugees and their impacts on adaptive capacity.

In addition, for countries hosting large refugee or IDP populations, their omission may jeopardize adaptation goals. Climate change adaptation does not occur in a vacuum. Refugees and/or displaced people may be a central part of a community or an economic sector, which underpins or dictates the success of larger climate change adaptation efforts. For example, refugees that have more access to land create positive spillover effects in the agricultural sector in local communities, increasing incomes for host communities and refugees alike. Studies also show that if refugees have access to the labor market, and if in the first year they have also been supported and assisted with some policies to find a job or to learn the language, they become productive assets in their second, third, and fourth years. When refugees have greater labor market access, they also increase tax revenue and boost innovation—both of which can be used to mobilize adaptation efforts in a self-perpetuating cycle of positive reinforcement.
Refugees and IDPs should also be included because climate change adaptation programming that targets them as beneficiaries may enable them to return home. In general, enabling refugees and IDPs to maintain secure and stable livelihoods in the face of climate shocks will ensure that they are able to better invest in their own human capital and rebuild their lives. South Sudan’s NAP, which targets an increase in the refugee resettlement rate from 10 to 55 percent, appears to have recognized this, but does not provide concrete steps in operationalizing this goal. Upon return, refugees and IDPs may bring new technical know-how to their communities, teaching others how to best adapt, but may also require support themselves if returning to conflict- or hazard-exposed areas.

Refugees and IDPs in the area of destination may be able to create an enabling environment back home for their families or communities through economic remittances, allowing increased or more targeted investments to be made in more resilient livelihoods and infrastructure. Indeed, in Kenya circular migration to and from refugee camps is already noted to be supporting drought-affected communities in Somalia. In some cases, adaptation efforts in refugee-hosting countries may enable refugees or IDPs to return home in a more timely and sustainable manner, or set them up for alternative durable solutions, such as successful local integration without a need for humanitarian assistance or resettlement elsewhere.

The Meaning of Meaningful Inclusion

The UNFCCC’s guiding principles on NAP preparation recommends that the development process should be “gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent... taking into consideration vulnerable groups.”

What does genuine participation look like? The United Nations’ online course on the NAP process proposes that inclusion in NAPs means:

“Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policymaking in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources”, “integrated throughout the process such as in institutional arrangements, capacity development, adaptation finance and distribution of information.”

More specific to refugees, the Global Refugee-led Network’s guidelines on refugee participation define meaningful refugee participation as:

“When refugees — regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity and demographics — are prepared for and participating in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at

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3 See Module 1: Exploring and Developing an NAP.
local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially (emphasis added).”

Given that adaptation to climate change is a long-term, ongoing, and hard-to-define issue, achieving genuine participation can be challenging, and it is possible that more narrowly defined and instrumental participation can be better than broad consultation processes.

Greater consultation of refugees and IDPs in NAP processes is crucial. Firstly, these communities know their own—considerable—needs better than any observer. Secondly, these communities often have limited voice, and without deliberate invitations to contribute to NAP processes their vulnerabilities may go unremarked.

Studies have highlighted the importance of involving marginalized stakeholders—such as women, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and youth—in a meaningful way.

Historically, these groups have been underrepresented in these processes. This is problematic for a variety of reasons, both from a rights-based and an impact point of view. As with any humanitarian or development plan, early consultation of the ‘beneficiary’ population is critical to designing a program that will succeed. While the literature on public participation in climate adaptation policymaking is still small, the evidence suggests that participation in local adaptation processes can have a significant impact on policy ambition. For this to happen, all actors must be recognized; they must be clearly and meaningfully engaged in all decision-making stages; the public must have full decision-making power; and a logic of welfare must be central.

How can human mobility be incorporated into NAPs?

Given the centrality of NAP processes in adaptation policymaking, many scholars and actors—from the FAO to the Platform on Disaster Displacement and the UN University—have argued that they provide a crucial space for bringing human mobility issues to the fore.

Some recognition of human mobility issues is already provided within UNFCCC discussions. The Cancun Adaptation Framework, firstly, recognized the potential impact of climate change on the movement of people, and importantly recognized that migration could represent a tool for adaptation. Second, at 2015’s COP21, the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM ExCom) established the Task Force on Displacement (TFD). The TFD is composed of representatives from across the UN system and tasked with developing
“recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize, and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change.” In 2018 the TFD recommended that the WIM ExCom, along with other relevant technical and support bodies of the UNFCCC, such as the Adaptation Committee and Least Developed Countries Expert Group, support countries in integrating human mobility issues into their NAPs.

How could this be achieved? Firstly, bringing human mobility considerations into NAPs requires understanding the impacts climate change will have on mobility in the country in question. This requires assessing how climate shocks could impact key economic sectors and spaces at the national and subnational levels, in order to assess how migration decisions could change. To achieve this, states may need to commission national assessments on migration, the environment, and climate change, bringing together existing data sources and the relevant research and policy. This step may include convening expert working groups of academic experts, civil society representatives, and policymakers at different levels. Importantly, policy siloes must be bridged to allow information to be gathered in a reliable and organized way.

Secondly, states should set out their priorities regarding human mobility in the context of a changing climate. This should include consideration of disaster risk reduction strategies, and should be undertaken in a cross-sectoral manner. The UN Disaster Risk Reduction agency provides four priorities for action, following the Sendai Framework. In the context of mobility, these priorities should include the preparation of early warning systems; the use of scenario planning based on local, short-term predictive efforts; the preparation of evacuation and pre-emptive relocation plans, including local-level preparations such as tenure mapping; and resilience-building approaches in communities of origin and destination.

Thirdly, NAP processes should include the creation of concrete mobility-related plans of action. These are likely to be broadly intended to either reduce the need for migration by supporting in situ adaptation in the area of origin, or to mainstream the role of adaptative migration, including through seasonal migration as a form of insurance; planned relocation; and gradual urbanization. At present, most programming focuses on reducing the need to migrate. It will also need to assist migrants during mobility, keeping migration from becoming maladaptive, and preparing to allow migration to occur proactively, before displacement or ‘distress migration’ becomes unavoidable. This could include:

- Ensuring that migrants are provided with coverage by social protection systems;

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4 These include: 1) understanding disaster risk, including vulnerability; adaptive capacity; exposure of persons and assets; hazard characteristics; and the hazard-exposed environment; 2) strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, mainstreaming and integrating disaster risk reduction within and across all sectors; 3) investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, allocating resources at all governance levels to develop and implement DRR strategies in all relevant sectors; and 4) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
• Forecasting and preparing for planned relocation needs;

• Supporting rural-urban migration; and

• Preparing response mechanisms for displacement situations.

Fourthly, funding mechanisms must be prepared to support NAP implementation. This may require significant capacity-building, especially at the subnational level, and a focus on breaking down siloes to allow mobility to be considered across government. Cities in particular will be crucial locations of climate-affected mobility, and will often require additional financial support.

More broadly, NAPs must be implemented. Different institutional settings and different forms of disaster will require different implementation approaches, recognizing that mobility responses will vary and that timelines will not be identical. Intersectional approaches should be taken during both planning and implementation, acknowledging that different groups will have varying needs, visibility to decision-makers, knowledge of their rights and opportunities, and ability to represent themselves in policy processes.

Finally, implementation of NAPs should be monitored by subcomponent and evaluated at each level. NAPs are currently frequently under-evaluated. Governments should take a similar approach to NAPs as that recommended by UNDRR for Sendai Framework implementation: disaster risk reduction strategies are required to have defined timescales, with targets, indicators, and timeframes for implementation. Better monitoring and evaluation would present an opportunity to ensure the inclusion of displaced groups.
Findings: Refugee and IDP Participation in NAP Planning Processes

Refugees International evaluated 44 NAPs submitted to the UNFCCC’s NAP Central database (as of March 23, 2023). While additional analysis could be done on all NAP plans, our review paints a grim picture of the state of refugee and IDP inclusion as both participants in NAP development and as beneficiaries of policies incorporated in NAP processes. Refugee and IDP populations are seldom recognized; they have limited meaningful engagement in even initial decision-making stages; they have no decision-making power; and the logic of welfare, when present, often excludes them.

Most countries recognize participation as a key principle or feature of the NAP process, but relatively few walk the talk.

Almost all NAPs acknowledged the relevance or need for participation in the development process. Approximately 35 percent of countries indicated that their NAPs were developed through a participatory process—meaning they reported hosting dialogues and meetings with different stakeholders to support the development of their adaptation plans. However, not all processes described as “participatory” may really achieve participation as measured by the above definitions. In some cases, participation meant inclusion of government officials and/or technical experts outside the government. These NAPs are therefore not truly participatory given their exclusion of affected populations.

In a limited number of cases, NAP processes included other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academia, and other civil society groups. Only a handful provided detailed descriptions of the participatory process, and fewer still a list of participants.

Bangladesh’s NAP stands out as being particularly inclusive, with efforts that sought out the participation of “...local people, women, people with diverse gender identities, persons with disabilities, youth, ethnic communities, children, elderly people, vulnerable communities, the private sector and disadvantaged groups” in their NAP process. The NAP explicitly states that its preparation involved the consultation of internal “climate refugees” (although without defining this group). At no point in the

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5 Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Grenada, Kenya, and Liberia.
6 Bangladesh, Chad, and Uruguay.
process, however, did its preparation consider or consult refugees as defined under the 1951 Convention, and the final document does not mention them, despite the large number of Rohingya refugees hosted in highly climate-vulnerable circumstances.\(^7\)

While some IDPs have been meaningfully engaged as stakeholders in the development of some National Adaptation Plans, refugees are entirely absent.

Among the plans examined, refugees and IDPs are largely absent from the descriptions of consultation processes. The Central African Republic’s (CAR’s) NAP even acknowledges that displaced persons were underrepresented in consultations for adaptation planning. This is particularly striking given its large population of IDPs. Failing to consult this population excludes a large portion of the country’s residents and disregards their knowledge and insights, missing an opportunity to build better plans and strategies for the whole country. Even among countries with large numbers of displaced persons and developed NAPs, including Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cameroon, and Niger, there is limited to no refugee participation in their creation. Cameroon and Niger only go so far as to note that refugees may have a role in future adaptation projects.\(^8\)

Countries that have submitted NAPs that host a high percentage of refugees relative to their total population include Chad, South Sudan, Sudan, Cameroon, Niger, and Kenya. Among these, South Sudan is the only country that is explicit about the need for refugee participation in the NAP process. However, this recognition is only briefly mentioned in the NAP’s foreword.\(^9\) Sudan and Kenya, despite hosting 1.14 million and 573,000 refugees respectively, do not address refugee participation in NAP processes in any way.

Countries with NAPs that have the largest absolute numbers of IDPs (Colombia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Cameroon, and Chad), as well as those with the largest percentage of IDPs compared to their total population (South Sudan, CAR, Sudan, Cameroon, and Bosnia and Herzegovina), also by and large do not engage IDPs in adaptation planning processes. South Sudan, Chad, and CAR offer some—albeit limited—mention of IDP inclusion in planning.

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\(^7\) Based on email exchange with NAP drafting team.

\(^8\) The number of refugees and IDPs in these calculations are based on 2021 data from UNHCR. Data is missing from the following countries: Cabo Verde, Haiti, Kiribati, Saint Lucia, Palestine, Timor Leste, and Tonga. In addition, these numbers do not include populations of concern, including Venezuelans, and therefore parts of the Americas responsibility to engage with displaced populations has been undercounted. Countries that are hosting a large number of Venezuelans, such as Colombia, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Peru also much be responsible for integrating them into adaptation planning and processes.

\(^9\) As discussed in the next section, some of these commitments have indeed turned into action for refugees as beneficiaries.
Refugees and IDPs have few clear opportunities to participate in climate adaptation planning and execution following the submission of NAPs.

The development of the NAP document is only one stage in a country’s adaptation planning process. While some NAPs outline next steps or areas of work, they rarely mention how residents—refugees and IDPs included—may participate in future processes, such as implementation of NAP activities, monitoring and evaluation, or revising and development of updated plans. Only a handful of countries’ NAPs (Brazil, Chile, Fiji, and South Sudan) explain how that participation may be facilitated in the future. Only South Sudan’s notes that refugees and IDPs should participate in these future processes. Very few NAPs make any abstract or concrete provisions for how refugees and IDPs will benefit from the implementation of adaptation policies. Without the opportunity to continue to participate in adaptation processes, there is a risk that these groups—among the most vulnerable to climate shocks—could be further marginalized and deprived of the resources they need.

Understanding Refugee and IDP populations as “Beneficiaries” of NAP Actions

Existing refugee or IDP populations are included formally as potential beneficiaries of adaptation planning in only a handful of countries. Yet even in those countries which include the forcibly displaced as beneficiaries, NAPs are frequently neither consistent nor robust in how the plans address or detail refugee and IDPs in adaptation planning.

For example, while Cameroon’s NAP mentions the need to specifically provide medical care for displaced persons as a part of its adaptation planning, it is unclear whether this would apply to existing displaced people or to those displaced in the future by climate change. Likewise Chad’s NAP notes that “refugees and other displaced persons often face increased risk due to their displacement status” and that “…protection challenges and solutions in Chad can only be properly addressed through a combination of concerted and coordinated humanitarian, resilience and development actions.” However, types of solutions to address these risks are not enumerated. It recognizes that refugees and the communities hosting them are more likely to experience hunger, notes that climate change and conflict interact to drive displacement and reduce adaptive capacity, and proposes that a growing refugee population has led to overexploitation of strained cropland. However, the NAP still does not fully set out how these risks could be mitigated.

10 These countries include Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and South Sudan.
Only two NAPs explicitly list specific adaptation programming relevant to existing refugees and IDPs.

Niger’s NAP notes that a concerted effort could be made to make climate change information accessible to women and young people, displaced people, refugees, and returnees that would increase their resilience. It also references including displaced people in sustainable forest and land management programming. South Sudan’s NAP includes a few tangible entry points for integration with the country’s National Development Strategy for 2018–2021, which could apply to IDPs and refugees. For refugees and returnees, this could involve vocational training, climate-smart agricultural techniques, climate-resilient building techniques, and infrastructure. It also recommends conducting vulnerability assessments for IDPs and other groups and acting to address them, and coordinating “between climate change adaptation efforts and humanitarian assistance and relief programs and refugee/displaced person return and resettlement efforts.”

Refugees and IDPs have been identified as potential beneficiaries of future adaptation programming in a small number of host countries.

Some NAPs acknowledge that refugees or IDPs are part of larger “vulnerable groups” that should be considered in future planning processes. CAR’s NAP acknowledges the need for a methodology to assess the needs of “vulnerable people,” including displaced people. South Sudan’s NAP notes that “special attention to groups that are most vulnerable to climate change impacts, including farmers, pastoralists, internally-displaced people (IDPs), and female-headed households” and pledges that the country’s approach will be attentive to IDPs and refugees. It further recognizes that:

- Refugee flows are a transnational phenomenon of importance to adaptation planning;
- Refugees being repatriated to South Sudan may be placed into climate-vulnerable situations, and that they will require support such as vocational training; and
- There are opportunities for synergies between climate change adaptation programs and humanitarian programs assisting refugees.

However, both CAR and South Sudan’s pledges are future-oriented, meaning that a gap remains when it comes to including displaced people in adaptation activities thus far.

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11 Benin, CAR, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Sudan
Almost none of the NAPs analyzed explicitly incorporate current refugees into climate-driven relocation or resettlement planning, but do plan for climate-induced displacement of their own populations.

Several NAPs cite the risks of displacement due to climate change for populations within their own countries, and the ways in which they can facilitate resettlement or planned relocation in the future. However, these NAPs do not mention whether or how current refugees will be included or supported in these efforts alongside citizens of these countries.

Many countries’ NAPs do outline specific priorities to support the adaptation of those displaced in the context of climate shocks. Guatemala’s NAP, for example, pledges the creation of an internal statistical system that counts those displaced by climate change, and the promotion of new policies that respond to the protection needs of displaced people. Ecuador’s NAP has an Annex focused on migration-related issues, and similarly pledges to gather data on vulnerabilities and options for relocation. Costa Rica’s NAP also recognizes the need for better data to support relocation and post-movement integration; Timor-Leste’s commits to research into relocation; and Uruguay’s, among others, commits to support for those relocated to urban areas. South Africa asserts simply that the country should “develop adaptation strategies for those that are displaced by climate change,” which may be sufficiently broad enough to include existing refugees, though it remains unclear. None of the NAPs that focus on planned relocation or resettlement refer to or take into account future refugee populations.

12 Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Tonga
Conclusions

Countries and the UNFCCC must fulfill commitments to participation of affected populations in the development of NAPs, including current refugees and IDPs as well as those who may be displaced by climate change in the future.

While the UNFCCC and national governments underscore the importance of the participation of vulnerable groups in NAP development, countries that submitted NAPs have not included refugees and IDPs thus far. Indeed, this research finds that not a single NAP explicitly included refugees or IDPs in the consultation process.

This exclusion continues within NAP content. Almost none of the NAPs analyzed explicitly incorporate existing refugees into plans for relocation or resettlement of populations due to climate change. This is a critical absence, given many refugees’ vulnerability and that refugee and IDP camps are often located in regions that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Likewise, none of the NAPs analyzed refer to or consider climate-induced migrants and how countries will prepare for and respond to the needs of these groups. As climate change worsens, proactively planning for adaptation—including various forms of mobility as an adaptation strategy—is a necessity and will save both lives and money.

Thus, NAP processes must include refugee and IDP populations as stakeholders in consultations. Not doing so will lead to inefficiencies—after all, these populations know their needs best—and continue their marginalization. NAPs must also target refugees and IDPs as beneficiaries of planned actions. With low adaptive capacity, refugees need financial support and a more enabling policy environment if they are to adapt to climate hazards. This is essential and within the spirit of the protection mandated by the 1951 Refugee Convention. It would also fulfill the principles of participation as outlined by the UNFCCC. Moreover, most countries hosting refugee and IDP populations cannot meet their adaptation goals without taking them into account—either because refugees or IDPs are such a large part of their population, or because their continued exposure to unmitigated risk may have spillover effects for the rest of the country.

Ultimately, refugees and IDPs are inadequately consulted in National Adaptation Plan processes, and are almost never included as beneficiaries. This needs to change. Refugees and IDPs face unusually high vulnerability to climate shocks, and without inclusion are unlikely to receive the support they need.
Appendix A

Please find our table of the 44 National Action Plans (NAPs) we studied for this report via this shared excel link. Images of the table will be included in this pdf soon.
Appendix B: Additional Information on NAP Creation

In its guidance on the creation of NAPs, the UNFCCC breaks the process down into four stages. During the “laying the groundwork” stage, countries are expected to identify weaknesses and gaps preventing adaptation from being mainstreamed, preparing to create an enabling environment for further activities. This includes identifying the necessary institutional arrangements and capacities for coordination, and assessing the available information on climate hazards, vulnerabilities and adaptation, and needs at different levels.

When considering “preparatory elements,” the UNFCCC advises giving consideration to the specific “needs, options and priorities” within the country, using national and regional institutions to promote “participatory and gender-sensitive approaches” to adaptation policies. This should include assessing adaptation needs at different timeframes, holding participatory stakeholder discussions, and mounting communications and awareness-raising efforts to educate stakeholders on the NAP process.

During the “implementation strategies” phase, work should be prioritized in recognition of varying development needs and urgency of adaptation in different contexts. Institutional and regulatory frameworks should be strengthened, training and coordination must be enhanced, and information on the NAP process should be shared with the public and the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Finally, the NAP process requires countries to prepare to monitor, review, and report the success of strategies. This allows countries to improve their processes, incorporate new findings from elsewhere, and to accurately report on their efforts.