



Climate change, migration, and human displacement

*Second Conference on adaptation to climate change in
developing countries (The Hague, 25 November 2008)*

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Outline

- **Displacement scenarios**
- **Terminology**
- **Filling gaps: policy, operational, financial, and capacity**
- **What else do we need to do?**



Displacement Scenarios

- **Climate change is “now”!**
- **Estimates:** vary wildly from 250 mio to 1 billion by 2050
- **Numbers:** from “creative extrapolation” to empirical evidence
- **Taking conservative estimate:** 6 million people per year, mainly in the developing world
- **“Humanitarian system”** cannot cope

Displacement Scenarios (2)

by Dr. Walter Kälin

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Rights of IDPs

- **Hydro-meteorological disasters: “extreme weather events” (sudden onset)**
- **Environmental degradation and or slow onset extreme hazard events: e.g. desertification (slow onset)**
- **Significant loss of territory: low-lying costal areas: ‘sinking small island’ states (slow onset)**
- **Armed conflict/violence over shrinking natural resources (Darfour?)**

Displacement Scenarios (3)



- **Probably more “internal” than “cross-border”**
- **“Tipping points”: *voluntary* versus *forced* displacement**
- ***Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* would apply**
- **Legal and operational gaps for cross-border movements**

Terminology



- UN cautions against using '**environmental**' or '**climate**' refugees
- **1951 UN Refugee Convention:**
“owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of **race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion**, is **outside his/her country of nationality** and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country...”



Terminology

- **Presently under discussion in UN frame: need to make progress by Copenhagen 2009**
- **IOM's "*environmental migrant*" too broad**
- **Inside countries: "*internally displaced persons*"**
- **Across borders: no consensus; refugees?; pragmatism versus legalism**

Filling gaps: policy, operational, financial, and capacity gaps

A Marshall Plan on Climate? (2)

- **Policy gaps:** adaptation frameworks at local and national level; “whole of government” approach; cross-border movements
- **Operational gaps:** emergency response, disaster risk reduction and preparedness
- **Financial gaps:** specific funding needed but will it be forthcoming in light of the global financial crisis?
- **Capacity gaps:** for adaptation, for emergency response, for planning

**Filling gaps: policy, operational,
financial and capacity**

A Marshall Plan on Climate? (3)

- **Focus on women and girls**
- **In Africa, for example, women produce 90 per cent of food for domestic consumption, are responsible for household water and energy needs, and are the first to understand the importance of preserving and managing scarce resources**



What else do we need to do?

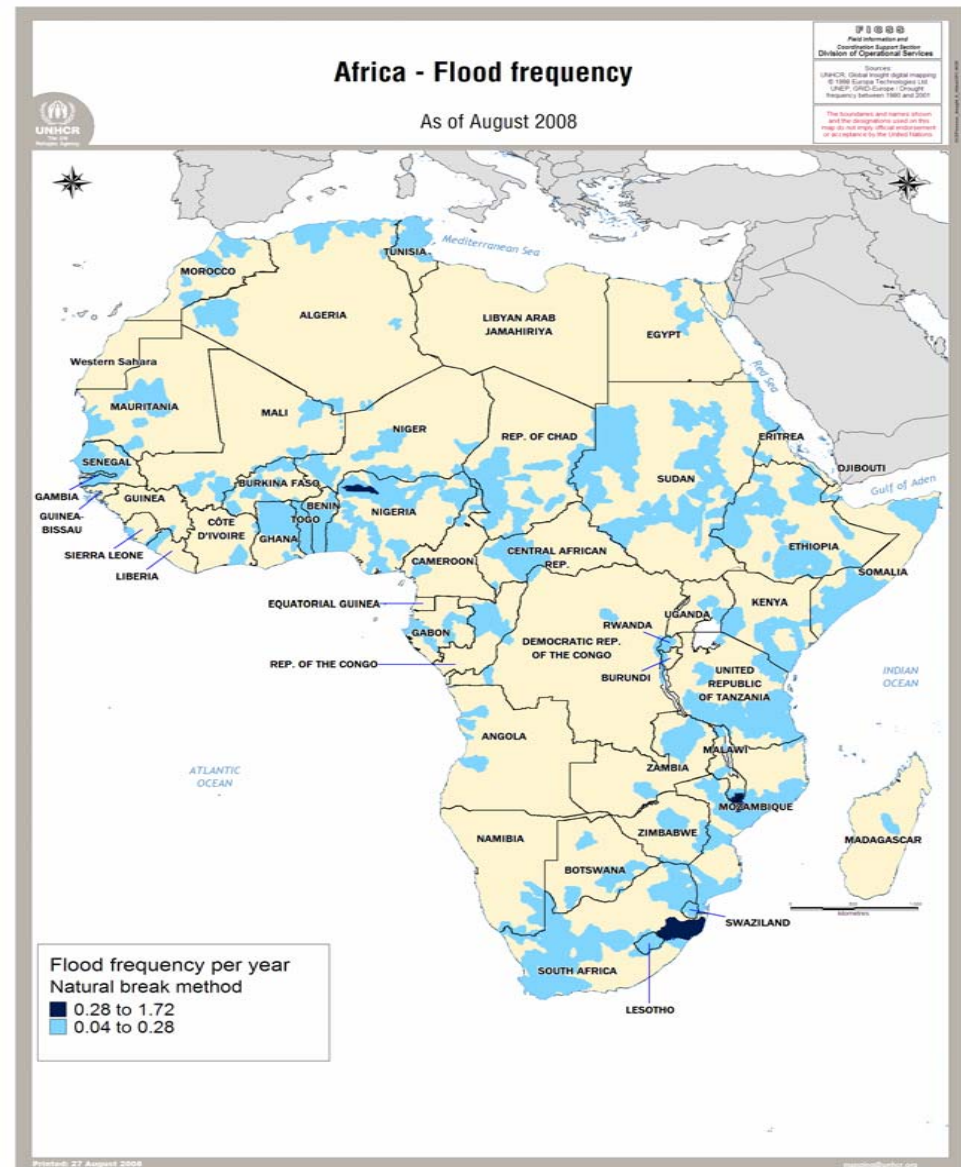
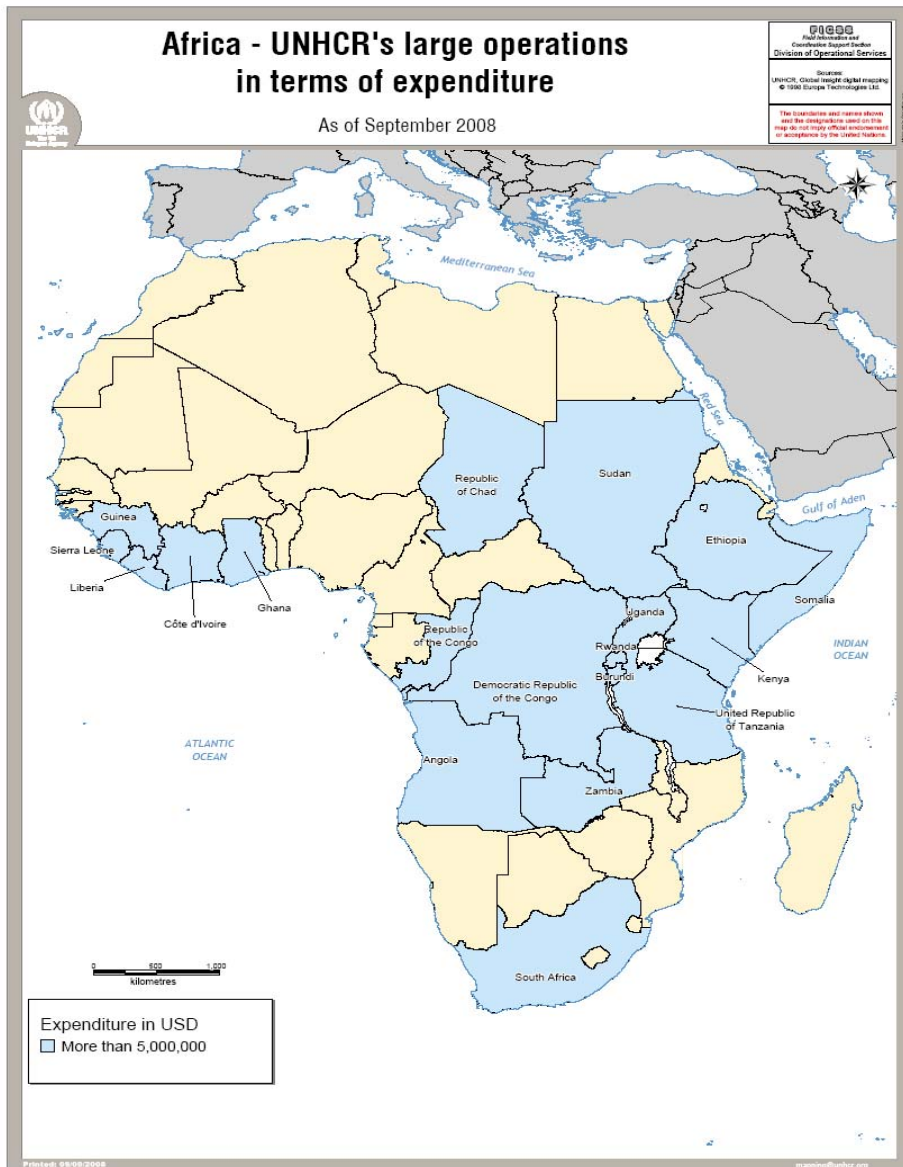
- **Act locally: grass-roots adaptation, contingency planning and disaster risk reduction**
- **Build capacity: local, national and regional**
- **Focus on “rights”**
- **Understand the issues: coherent research agenda**
- **Improve emergency and humanitarian response: locally, regionally, and globally**

UNHCR's role in natural disasters

UNHCR is frequently called upon to assist in natural disasters as it has the experience and capability

- **2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka**
- **2005 South Asia Earthquake in Pakistan**
- **2006 Floods in Somalia**
- **2007 Floods in Pakistan**
- **2008 Cyclone in Myanmar**

What about UNHCR operations?



UNHCR's responses to displacement scenarios

1. **UNHCR's role for the environmentally displaced persons seeking safety abroad may be called for:**
 - **refugee movements provoked by armed conflict rooted in environmental factors**
 - **'Sinking small island states': relocation schemes; statelessness would be a concern to UNHCR.**
 - **Further analysis needed on the "forced" character of other cross-border movements**
2. **Conflict-induced IDPs will be dealt with by UNHCR through "Cluster Approach" – but that approach will need to be adjusted given exponential growth**

Want more information?

- To learn more about UNHCR's views and activities, visit our climate change webpage

[www.unhcr.org/
climate](http://www.unhcr.org/climate)

