



Climate Action Plan for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region

2023-2028

OVERVIEW

The climate crisis is driving displacement and making life harder for those already forced to flee. Protection and solutions for displaced people are becoming more difficult to achieve as climate change adds to degraded and dangerous conditions in areas of origin and refuge. Millions of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people are living in climate “hotspots”, where they typically lack the resources to adapt to an increasingly inhospitable environment. The East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes (EHAGL) Region is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions globally and has seen the number of forcibly displaced people in the region almost triple over the past decade.

Forcibly displaced populations often live in areas that are expected to see the most drastic increases in climate hazards by 2030. To address the challenges they face, UNHCR seeks to form a coalition of partners across the humanitarian-development-climate-security nexus, and leverage climate adaptation and resilience investments in support of areas hosting forcibly displaced populations. UNHCR will also strengthen its operations to meet the protection and assistance needs exacerbated by climate emergencies. Much of the work we do in vulnerable humanitarian contexts, ranging from preparedness and response, cash-based assistance, durable shelter, and others, contributes to the climate resilience and adaptive capacities of displaced and host communities, but we need to do more.

The key objectives of the 2023-2028 UNHCR EHAGL Region Climate Action Plan, which lists priority action points to better implement existing UNHCR global climate commitments, are the following:

- Through increased legal, policy and normative engagement, states will improve their capacity to consistently provide protection to people fleeing from and living in climate crises. UNHCR will provide legal and policy advice, guidance, and support to national governments, regional economic communities, and other relevant stakeholders, to develop enhanced protection for refugees and other people displaced in the context of disasters and climate change.
- Through expanded partnerships and scaled up financing, displaced populations and their hosts will have increased access to environmentally sustainable resources and services. We are committed to reducing environmental degradation in displacement settings and enhancing the preparedness and resilience of displaced people and host communities. We will continue to advocate for a scale up on adaptation financing and support to climate action in countries and host community areas where displaced people take refuge or hope to safely return to.
- Through inclusion into national plans and systems, forcibly displaced, stateless people and their hosts will have the economic and physical means to prepare for, survive and recover from climate shocks and stresses. UNHCR will advocate for the inclusion of refugees into regional and national climate change related policies and plans and strive to improve their anticipatory and early warning capacities to better prepare for emergencies brought on by climate-related and other natural hazards.

UNHCR will also continue its efforts to function with a significantly reduced carbon footprint and to have the means and systems in place to minimize negative impacts on the environment. We seek to reduce the carbon footprint of our own operations by implementing green solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Introduction

“Right now, in our region, climate change is amplifying the risk of conflict and ultimately forcing already vulnerable people to flee their homes. We need proactive and bold action, commitment, and dedication from all actors to protect communities, and to find solutions with and for those on the frontlines of the climate emergency.”

Mamadou Dian Balde

Director, Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes

As a central component of the [2022-2026 UNHCR Strategic Directions](#), UNHCR has globally identified eight focus areas that require renewed attention and accelerated effort. One of these is climate action. In 2021, UNHCR published its [Strategic Framework for Climate Action](#) and, in 2022, its [Operational Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability \(2022-2025\)](#).

This Regional Climate Action Plan for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes (EHAGL)¹ outlines a five-year vision and roadmap for the operationalization of these two documents. It highlights how UNHCR aims to accelerate results on climate action in the EHAGL region, in line with the ambition of the [UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026](#) and its [Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030](#).

The Regional Climate Action Plan also builds upon partnerships and regional climate frameworks, such as the [Regional Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan \(2023-2030\)](#) by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). This Strategy highlights the geographical differences and climatic vulnerabilities of the IGAD Member States (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda), and proposes key joint solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation. It also seeks to leverage work being undertaken with IGAD's Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) to develop targeted climate adaptation measures for areas hosting forcibly displaced populations.

The present plan was developed following a regional Theory of Change (ToC) workshop on Climate Change held in Nairobi in May 2023, and led by a Multifunctional Climate Team at the EHAGL Regional Bureau. The Plan was validated by technical focal points and sector leads at the Regional Bureau as well as climate focal points in country operations; and was finalized following consultations with key partners across the humanitarian-development-climate-security nexus.

¹ UNHCR's Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes covers the following countries: Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda.

Situation analysis

Refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless people are on the frontlines of the climate emergency. Many are living in climate “hotspots”, where they typically lack the resources to adapt to an increasingly hostile environment and are therefore unable to live self-sufficient and dignified lives. UNHCR is providing protection and assistance to many refugees and other people displaced by the effects of climate change, as well as helping them increase their resilience to future disasters.

By October 2023, the EHAGL region hosted a total of 19 million forcibly displaced individuals. Of these, more than 5.4 million were refugees and asylum-seekers, meaning the region hosted one out of every six refugees globally. Over 13.6 million persons were internally displaced.² Of the latter, at least 2.1 million people were living in internal displacement by the end of 2022 following the impacts of hazardous climate-related events or “disasters”, primarily floods and droughts.³

A joint UNHCR-IGAD study, funded by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) on [Human Mobility and Climate Change in the IGAD region](#)⁴, shows that in the EHAGL region, climate change is a “risk multiplier” that is driving both displacement and deepening protection needs. It underscores that resilience to environmental degradation and climate-related disasters and displacement is often lowest in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

A recent IMF paper on [Climate Challenges in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States](#)⁵ finds that climate vulnerability and underlying fragilities, namely conflict, heavy dependence on rainfed agriculture, and weak capacity and policy buffers, exacerbate each other, amplifying the negative impact on people and economies. Of the eleven countries covered by UNHCR’s EHAGL Regional Bureau, six (Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan) appear on the [2024 list of fragile and conflict-affected situations \(FY24 FCS list\)](#), released annually by the World Bank Group (WBG). These six countries host 47 per cent of all refugees and asylum-seekers in the region as well as 100 per cent of all IDPs. Meanwhile, as of 2022, approximately 4.8 million refugees and asylum-seekers, constituting 97 per cent of the total population hosted in the region of around 4.9 million, originate from fragile and conflict-affected states.⁶

Many displaced populations are frequently located in peripheral, rural, or peri-urban locations and rely on agropastoralism as their primary source of income. They lack social safety nets that can assist with loans and support to diversify income sources. In addition, access to sufficient, good quality land for agriculture-based livelihoods remains challenging, despite farming being one of the key sectors of employment. A similar situation applies to grazing land which is frequently community owned or managed. Growing competition over access to water, land, pasture, forests, and other natural resources that are essential for food security, energy needs, and climate-sensitive livelihoods will further impact on protection and solutions for displaced populations in the region.

Furthermore, legal frameworks in some countries in the EHAGL region do not foster formal access to employment for refugees. According to an internal livelihoods survey by UNHCR conducted in 2023, 66 per cent of refugees live in countries with limited or no access in practice to formal employment. The main restrictions to access formal employment include necessities of work permits, administrative restrictions, as well as high unemployment rates in the host economies.

² For up-to-date statistics on forced displacement: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/rbehagl>.

³ [Global Internal Displacement Database | IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(internal-displacement.org\)](#).

⁴ Report on human mobility and climate change in the IGAD region, commissioned by UNHCR and IOM and funded by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The study provides insights into cross-border migration linked to climate change and disasters in the border regions of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

⁵ About one in five countries around the world are Fragile and Conflict-Affected States facing varied challenges, including high levels of institutional and social fragility as well as violent conflict. Fragile and Conflict-Affected States have lower per capita income and growth rates, higher poverty and undernourishment, and higher inequality than other countries. They host 43 % of the global poor living on less than \$2.15 per day while only accounting for 12 per cent of the world’s population. They are highly exposed to climate change and must bear the immense burden of climate adaptation without having the means or capacity to adapt. Source: Jaramillo et al.: “Climate Challenges in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States.” IMF Staff Climate Note 2023/001, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC.

⁶ Annual Statistical Report, 2022.

The impact of increased frequency and severity of droughts in the Horn of Africa, including as a driver of large-scale displacement, was highlighted by a recent [UNHCR Drought Appeal](#). Between January 2022 and June 2023, there have been 254,244 new arrivals of refugees and asylum seekers into drought affected areas in the Horn of Africa.⁷ A drought analysis by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has highlighted the loss of over 13 million livestock in the Horn of Africa, heavily impacting pastoral communities, increasing food insecurity and impacting dairy and meat availability in the region.⁸ The [Council on Foreign Relations' Center for Preventative Action](#) notes that the drought, compounded by the effects of the invasion of Ukraine, has had negative consequences on food prices, affecting food security of the most vulnerable. Changes in weather patterns are also connected to the spread of invasive species, including devastating desert locust outbreaks.⁹

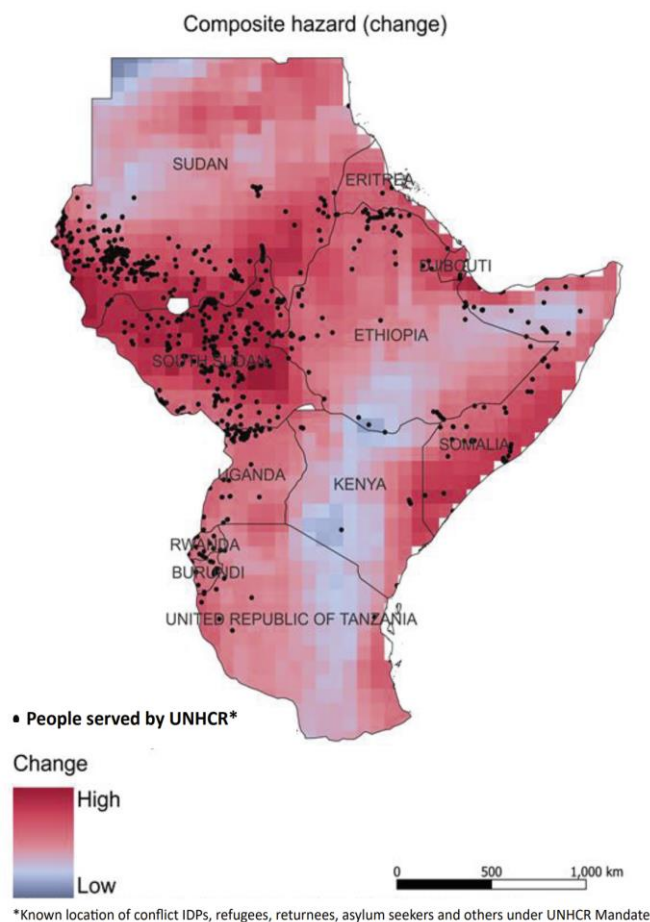


Figure: Change in composite heat, drought and flood hazards and locations of forcibly displaced and stateless people, baseline to 2030, EHAGL region.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the region is also getting wetter in some areas. Precipitation extremes are becoming more unpredictable, with a growing risk of recurrent floods in countries like South Sudan. A recent ICPAC [Update on El Nino and its likely impacts on Eastern Africa](#) reports that there is a high likelihood of enhanced rainfall during the 2023 October-December season, which could provide some relief to areas affected by the recent drought but could also lead to more flash floods, riverine floods and landslides.

A 2023 EHAGL Situation Analysis conducted by the [CGIAR Fragility Conflict and Migration Initiative](#)¹⁰ jointly with UNHCR's Office of the Special Advisor on Climate Action highlighted some alarming predictions for harsh climatic changes by 2030 related to drought, floods, and extreme heat exposure. The risk of drought will increase dramatically in Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi. Sudan will remain exposed to severe drought stress in the future. By 2030, the risk of floods is expected to rise most drastically in areas in the western parts of the region that are already prone to high flood risk. CGIAR used the Heat Index (HI) to determine that heat stress is currently affecting populations in Eritrea, Djibouti, and Sudan, with increases occurring by 2030 in Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. Merging heat, drought and flood risks are anticipated in South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. Overall, heat and drought stress account for the most severe increases in risk.

According to CGIAR, given the frequent co-occurrence between resource conflicts¹¹ and onset of climate hazards, it may be assumed that increased inter-communal conflicts may occur in areas of most severe increases in compound climate risks. Refugee-hosting sites are remarkably often located in areas of compounded climatic and conflict hotspots.

⁷ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102241>.

⁸ <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/horn-of-africa---the-region-is-facing-an-unprecedented-disaster/en>.

⁹ See FAO: *Climate change and food security: risks and responses* (2013), p. 12.

¹⁰ Climate data are sourced from the 6th Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP6) who use climate models to understand how the climate may evolve in future (<https://www.wcrp-climate.org/wgcm-cmip6>). The same data and models have been utilized in the IPCC Global Assessment Reports (<https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/>). The Baseline represent average climate for the period spanning 1981 to 2010, while the near-term future is represented by an average of the years 2020-2040.

¹¹ Data taken from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).

While humanitarian assistance remains to a large extent focused on the ability to respond to the immediate impacts of climate-related emergencies to save and protect lives, funding for climate action needs to be multi-year, with development financing aligned to national development and adaptation plans as well as resilience initiatives to ensure lasting impact. To date, however, many countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, including in the EHAGL region, received less than the average amount of climate adaptation financing per capita in comparison to other lower-income countries, despite ranking at the top of climate vulnerability indices.¹² In this context, considering investments aiming at fostering self-reliance becomes even more pivotal, as it holds the potential to reduce the critical need for ongoing assistance over the mid- to long-term.

Despite the challenging climate and environmental issues highlighted above, there are some key partnerships, initiatives and promising practices that have yielded results in the region. UNHCR has a long-standing engagement with [IGAD](#) on issues related to forced displacement. IGAD has been at the forefront of regional climate discussions and declarations and is highly engaged in managing the complex transboundary challenges raised by climate change and climate-induced migration. The [IGAD Protocol on Free Movement of Persons](#) and the [IGAD Protocol on Transhumance](#) will be essential in addressing migration flows in the future. IGAD also plays a lead role on early warning systems and disaster preparedness through its [Conflict Early Warning and Response Network \(CEWARN\)](#).

In 2021, IGAD established the [IGAD Center of Excellence for Climate Adaptation and Environmental Protection \(IGAD CAEP\)](#) which is in the process of developing a Regional Adaptation Strategy that complements existing climate-related strategies and action plans¹³ and ensures enhanced resilience capacity and resources to adapt to climate change. UNHCR is partnering closely with IGAD CAEP to include forcibly displaced and stateless communities in adaptation planning and programming. IGAD has also put in place a Regional Climate Security Coordination Mechanism¹⁴ to address climate-induced mobility.¹⁵

IGAD has furthermore developed several projects with UNHCR and IOM related to human mobility in the context of disasters and climate change. One of these projects focusses on “[Addressing drivers and facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration in the context of disasters and climate change in the IGAD region](#)”, and was funded by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) from 2021-2023.¹⁶

Another key regional partner is the East African Community (EAC), which has implemented a [transborder initiative to strengthen resilience through Policy, Adaptation, Research, and Economic Development \(PREPARED\)](#) and could help foster collective action by improving economic cooperation and encouraging shared management of freshwater ecosystems. This will assist in finding durable solutions for forcibly displaced populations who often reside in proximity of borders and need to be included in national and regional planning initiatives.

The [Food Security and Nutrition Working Group \(FSNWG\)](#) is a regional platform, currently co-chaired by ICPAC and FAO, with a two-fold goal: to provide an up-to-date food security and nutrition situation analysis including early warning, and to offer a forum to build consensus on critical issues facing policy and interventions, including among displaced populations.

The region has also seen some initiatives that focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation. In Uganda, UNHCR is partnering with the national forestry authority and local communities to plant 10 million seedlings a year to meet the energy and nutrition needs of refugees and their hosts. In Rwanda, UNHCR supported the planting of nearly 400,000 seedlings in refugee-hosting locations. The Ethiopian government has consistently made global headlines with large scale tree planting

¹² See SPARC: [Exploring the Conflict Blind Spots in Climate Adaptation Finance. Synthesis Report](#) (2021).

¹³ Existing IGAD climate-related strategies and action plans include the IGAD Regional Strategy (2021-2025), IGAD Regional Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030), IGAD Strategy for Sustainable and Resilient Livestock Development in View of Climate Change (2022-2037), IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) as well as Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Development Policies and their Consideration of Disaster Displacement and Human Mobility in the IGAD region among others.

¹⁴ Result 7 of the [Communiqué to the IGAD-UN OSEHOA High Level Inter-Ministerial Event on Climate Change, Peace, and Security on 7 November 2022](#).

¹⁵ The [IGAD-UN OSE Horn Report on the State of Climate, Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa](#) elaborates on this pathway.

¹⁶ This joint programme was co-led by IOM and ILO; other participating entities were IGAD, PDD and UNHCR. UNHCR is also working with IOM on the Regional Migrant Response Plan and other areas of Mixed Movement, and UNHCR is enhancing its collaboration with IOM under the joint [Framework of Engagement from June 2022](#).

targets since launching its [Green Legacy Initiative \(GLI\)](#) in 2019, which aimed to plant 20 billion trees by 2022. The initiative has directly created [767,000 green jobs](#) – mostly for women and youth – in these four years.

UNHCR has further partnered with the Center for International Forestry Research-International Center for Research in Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) under the [refugee-hosting engagement landscape programme](#). Work in the EHAGL region focuses on addressing basic needs and [building resilient landscapes and livelihoods through evidence-supported long-term socio-ecological solutions in refugee hosting landscapes](#).

UNHCR is also partnering with FAO for the project "[Greening the Humanitarian Response in Displacement Settings](#)" to support ecosystem restoration and sustainable forest management so as to enhance energy access and livelihood resilience for refugees and host communities in four countries in the EHAGL region (Uganda, Djibouti, Tanzania, and Somalia).

The [CGIAR Research Initiative on Fragility, Conflict, and Migration \(FCM\)](#) aims to enhance the resilience of food, land, and water systems in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where migration-related challenges are prevalent. Using a systems approach, and working in partnership with local stakeholders, the initiative seeks to generate evidence to inform effective policies and programs that promote social and gender equity, climate resilience, conflict mitigation, and peace building.

Vision

“People fleeing climate crises, persecution, violence, and human rights violations and those living in climate-vulnerable countries are protected, resilient to the impacts of climate change and can lead self-sufficient lives.”

The above **vision** is underpinned by UNHCR’s commitment to “Greening the Blue” through mitigating the impact of its own presence and actions and ensuring that carbon emissions released through UNHCR’s operations are reduced and the environment is protected.

Theory of Change

UNHCR’s Theory of Change to achieve this vision is:

If UNHCR secures sufficient funding, leverages effective partnerships, and improves data and evidence in the region (**regional enablers**); and **if** country operations scale-up advocacy, community engagement, mobilization of partners and technical support to Governments and other relevant entities (**country-level actions**); **then**, gradually, we will be able to achieve results in the following areas:

Legal and normative frameworks

- Increased government capacity to develop and implement legal and institutional policy frameworks to minimize, prepare for, and respond to displacement linked to climate shocks and stresses, including interpretation and application of the relevant frameworks.
- Increased government capacity in the provision of durable solutions.

- Non-governmental actors are meaningful players in advocacy on laws and policies.
- Displaced, stateless and other impacted communities are aware about their rights in the context of climate change and have the capacity to advocate for them.
- Relevant and correct legal considerations are applied when people seek asylum in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.
- “Alternative” status and/or temporary protection / temporary stay for people whose life and/or other human rights could be at risk because of climate change is provided.

Climate-conscious partnerships and financing for increased access to environmentally sustainable resources and services

- Contribution to regional platforms or taskforces related to climate change to ensure inclusion and protection mainstreaming of all activities.
- Advocacy for and participation in joint funds to support climate affected countries.
- Networking and shared best practices between operations and inter-agency structures.
- Green energy (e.g., cooking fuels, ecological charcoal).
- Climate resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities.
- Safe and environmentally sustainable management of waste.
- Integrated, climate-resilient settlements and shelters constructed using locally available materials.
- Increased capacity of forcibly displaced and stateless and their hosts to restore and protect the environment (e.g., through reforestation).
- Increased knowledge, capacity, and motivation of populations to use environmentally sustainable resources and services.

Early warning, inclusion, and resilience

- Effective early warning and preparedness systems.
- Climate resilient livelihoods and climate-sensitive economic inclusion.
- Provision of social safety nets and social protection mechanisms.
- Sustainable sourcing for basic needs and food.
- Inclusion of displaced persons in disaster risk reduction and climate action adaptation plans, policies, strategies and mechanisms at the national, local, and inter-agency level.
- Inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless individuals in accessing basic services in the event of climate hazards.
- Participation of affected communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities related to the preparation for or response to climate hazards.

If the changes leading to these results are successful and sustainable then, by 2028:

1. States increase their legal, policy and normative engagement and improve their capacity to consistently provide protection to people fleeing from and living in climate-vulnerable countries.
2. Expanded partnerships and scaled up financing facilitates increase access of displaced populations and their hosts to environmentally sustainable resources and services.
3. Forcibly displaced and stateless populations are included into national plans and systems and, together with their hosts, have the economic and physical means to prepare for, survive and recover from climate shocks and stresses.

Simultaneously, UNHCR will function with a significantly reduced carbon footprint and have the means and systems in place to minimize negative impacts on the environment. Consequently, the joint efforts at improvement of the legal frameworks; collaboration and scaled up financing for increased access to environmentally sustainable resources and services; inclusion into national systems together with adaptation and increased resilience; and mitigation of the environmental impact of UNHCR's operations will lead to the fulfilment of the above vision for the region.

The Theory of Change is based on the following **assumptions** for the EHAGL region:

- i. The protection needs of persons fleeing and living in climate crises are recognized and integrated into the displacement management strategies of regional economic communities (RECs) such as IGAD and EAC.
- ii. Sub-regional institutions and the civil society collaborate with UNHCR to influence governments to support the vision and include forcibly displaced people in their climate action plans.
- iii. Governments are willing to adapt their legal frameworks.
- iv. Governments, humanitarian, development, private sector, climate, and other actors are willing to work jointly to support climate adaptation in areas hosting displaced populations.
- v. Displaced and stateless communities are willing and able to use natural resources sustainably and understand how to claim their rights in the context of climate change.

UNHCR's interventions will be guided by the [Global Strategic Framework for Climate Action](#) and UNHCR's operational presence and designated role in the Humanitarian Cluster Approach within the region. Community-based protection principles, including [Age, Gender, and Diversity](#) as well as [Accountability to affected people](#), will be mainstreamed throughout all activities. Priority actions should be implemented in partnership and collaboration with governments and other relevant stakeholder.

Regional Objective 1: Through increased legal, policy and normative engagement, states will improve their capacity to consistently provide protection to people fleeing from and living in climate crises.

In the last decade, the relationship between climate change impacts, conflict and human rights has become increasingly apparent. The adverse effects of climate change and disasters are often exacerbated by other factors such as poor governance undermining public order, scarce natural resources, fragile ecosystems, demographic changes, socio-economic inequality, xenophobia, and political and religious tensions, in some cases leading to violence. As a result of these negative impacts of climate change and disasters combined with social vulnerabilities, people may be compelled to leave their country and seek international protection.

People will be refugees under the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) definition when they flee conflict or violence caused or exacerbated by the effects of climate change and disasters, rendering the State unable or unwilling to protect the victims and leaving them at risk of persecution; or in other situations where persecution risks linked to a Convention ground arises. International protection may also be granted within wider regional definitions like the [1969 OAU Convention](#) – including notably those compelled to leave their countries in the contexts of events or circumstances seriously disturbing public order related to climate change or disaster. Under human rights law, people at risk of serious human rights violations linked to the effects of climate change and disaster may be recognized as needing international protection under non-refoulement obligations.

Through the provision of authoritative technical and legal guidance, UNHCR will support the development of technical capacity of state institutions and other relevant entities to ensure that policy makers, the judiciary, and the legal profession, among

others, can provide and ensure respect for protection and develop policies in line with relevant international and regional legal frameworks.

UNHCR, as part of the [Multi Partner Trust Fund Joint Programme on Addressing Drivers and Facilitating Safe and Orderly Migration in the Contexts of Disasters and Climate Change in the IGAD Region](#), commissioned a [case study on Human Mobility and Climate Change in the IGAD Region](#) in the shared border regions of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The report highlights a lack of a single unified protection framework for the region that provides protection to populations displaced because of disasters and climate change. Furthermore, the regional, national and local protection frameworks are not implemented in a cohesive manner. Hence, there is a need to establish a regional human rights-based Protection Framework on human mobility in the context of climate change.

UNHCR will advocate and support governments and RECs to develop and implement legal and institutional policy frameworks to minimize, prepare for and respond to displacement linked to climate shocks and stresses. This objective seeks to ensure:

- i. States and RECs in the EHAGL region have increased **understanding** of protection entitlements for people forced to flee in climate contexts.
- ii. States in the EHAGL region have **institutions** with sufficient technical capacity for protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people in climate contexts and climate action plans include costing and allocated budgets for areas hosting forcibly displaced populations.
- iii. RECs and states in the EHAGL region have **normative frameworks** providing for protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people in climate change affected contexts.
- iv. Hosting countries in the EHAGL region have increased **incentive and motivation** to provide protection and durable solutions to forcibly displaced and stateless people.

UNHCR global Outcome Areas:



Output groups:

- Increased government capacity to develop and implement policy frameworks to minimize, prepare for, and respond to displacement linked to climate shocks and stresses, including application of the relevant frameworks.
- Increased government capacity in the provision of durable solutions.
- Strengthened partnership with non-governmental actors who are meaningful players in advocacy on laws and policies.
- Displaced, stateless and other impacted communities are aware about their rights in the context of climate change and have the capacity to advocate for them.
- Relevant legal considerations are applied for people seek asylum in the context of adverse effects of climate change.
- “Alternative” status and/or temporary protection / temporary stay for people whose life and/or other human rights could be at risk because of climate change is provided as appropriate and in line with global directives and relevant regional frameworks.

Regional Objective 2: Through expanded partnerships and scaled up financing, displaced populations and their hosts have increasing access to environmentally sustainable resources and services.

The [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#) highlights the need for UNHCR to work closely with key partners to achieve meaningful change in the lives of forcibly displaced populations. States need to be supported in their responsibility sharing to enable a safe environment for displaced populations not only to survive, but to thrive. In line with the GCR, UNHCR therefore aims to collaborate closely with key actors who influence climate advocacy and action.

UNHCR's operations in the EHAGL region will require an increase in technical expertise to fundraise, coordinate and catalyze new partnerships for meaningful change. The resilience of forcibly displaced and stateless persons to climate impacts will largely depend on access to financial, technical, and institutional resources that address their immediate needs and opportunities for long-term solutions. Efforts will be made to seek new sources of funding for humanitarian-response countries and to mobilize climate and development financing in support of multi-year climate projects for prevention and solutions.

Dedicated climate and development partnerships focal points at the regional level are required to plan and pitch for funding. Trainings and capacity development on climate action will be developed and made available to staff members at the regional level to ensure climate becomes a focus in every sector and intervention.

UNHCR global Outcome Areas:



Output groups:

- Contribute to regional platforms or taskforces related to climate change to ensure inclusion and protection mainstreaming of all activities.
- Advocacy for and participation in joint funds to support climate affected countries.
- Networking and sharing best practices between operations and inter-agency structures.
- Green energy (e.g., cooking fuels, ecological charcoal).
- Climate resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities.
- Safe and environmentally sustainable management of waste.
- Integrated, climate-resilient settlements and shelters constructed using locally available materials.
- Increased capacity of populations to restore and protect the environment (e.g., through reforestation).
- Increased knowledge, capacity, and motivation of populations to use environmentally sustainable resources and services.

Regional Objective 3: Through inclusion into national plans and systems, forcibly displaced, stateless populations and their hosts will have the economic and physical means to prepare for, survive and recover from climate shocks and stresses.

The integration of forcibly displaced populations into national climate change policies must be prioritized in joint regional advocacy efforts, in close collaboration with RECs, UN agencies, NGOs, multilateral development banks and donors. These partnerships will also be leveraged to support advocacy for legal and policy frameworks that provide safety nets for forcibly displaced and allow them to diversify income sources away from agropastoralism which is highly susceptible to climatic change. This should include access to formalized employment based on decent work principles, access to finance, skills development, and opportunities in urban spaces. To achieve meaningful inclusion, the change needs to be community driven, with local and indigenous environmental knowledge at the center.

Governments in the EHAGL region have shown strong commitment to climate action by signing the Paris Agreement and submitting their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Somalia explicitly includes displacement in its NDC through concrete and contextual provisions, while Kenya, South Sudan and Burundi include displacement in their NDCs through a contextual reference.¹⁷ Additionally, the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) of Kenya, Sudan and South Sudan explicitly include displacement through concrete provisions, while Ethiopia's NAP contains contextual references to displacement.

Early warning capacities and processes in the EHAGL region have been strengthened significantly over the last years and are often able to predict natural hazards such as droughts well before impacts are seen on the ground.¹⁸ UNHCR is and will continue to be a predictable partner working with a wide range of stakeholders to anticipate, prepare for and respond to emergencies and displacement brought on by climate-related and other natural hazards.

UNHCR will participate in local, regional, and global mechanisms and initiatives on early warning and early action and seek to ensure that protection and displacement considerations are integrated within disaster risk reduction and risk management policies, strategies and adaptation plans for early warning, preparedness, response, and recovery. Furthermore, working with its partners, UNHCR will deploy specialized technical capacities to support environmentally friendly and sustainable preparedness, response, and solutions, and contribute to national and regional Disaster Risk Reduction plans.

UNHCR global Outcome Areas:

	7 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT		8 WELL-BEING AND BASIC NEEDS		9 SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND SETTLEMENTS		10 HEALTHY LIVES
	13 SELF RELIANCE, ECONOMIC INCLUSION AND LIVELIHOODS		14 VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION		15 RESETTLEMENT AND COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS		16 LOCAL INTEGRATION AND OTHER LOCAL SOLUTIONS

¹⁷ This analysis is based on a forthcoming OECD policy paper on "Forced displacement in climate adaptation planning". In this context, concrete provisions mean that concrete commitments or objectives and/or tangible actions are identified or have been conducted already. A contextual reference means that the topic is acknowledged without concrete provisions.

¹⁸ Joint Advocacy Document: CALL TO ACTION – Resilience and System Strengthening – "Before the next drought strikes". April 2023.

Output groups:

- Effective early warning and preparedness systems.
- Climate resilient livelihoods and climate-sensitive economic inclusion.
- Provision of social safety nets and social protection mechanisms.
- Sustainable sourcing for basic needs and food.
- Inclusion of displaced persons in disaster risk reduction and climate action adaptation plans, policies, strategies, and mechanisms at the national, local, and inter-agency level.
- Inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless individuals in accessing basic services in the event of climate hazards.
- Participation of affected communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities related to the preparation for or responding to climate hazards.



South Sudanese refugee plants trees to combat climate change. Uganda.

Regional enablers

Partnerships

UNHCR will promote close collaboration with national ministries and institutions beyond our traditional interlocutors, including Ministries of Environment, Energy, Climate, National Forestry Authorities, and others to ensure inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless populations into national strategies and action plans. UNHCR will also continue to expand its engagement with RECs (IGAD and EAC) as well as regional bodies such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), who can support with leveraging governments to protect people and address climate impacts in areas hosting forcibly displaced and stateless populations.

UNHCR will also work closely with financial institutions, including but not limited to the World Bank Group, Islamic Development Bank and African Development Bank, alongside bilateral development donors, to increase investments in environmentally sustainable services and infrastructure. Partnering with UN sister agencies that are leading in climate adaptation discussions such as UNEP, UNDP, IOM, ILO, and FAO will be key to advocate for inclusion of forcibly displaced into strategies, policies and projects.

CGIAR and other technical centers, as well as academia and universities can assist with technical capacity, data and evidence. Meanwhile, national non-governmental organizations, civil society and refugee-led organizations are important partners to implement climate smart programming, while the private sector can support the provision of sustainable technical solutions (e.g., green energy) and climate-resilient livelihoods in areas hosting forcibly displaced and stateless populations.

Data and evidence

Multiple studies and data systems in the region aim to unravel the intricate connection between climate change, conflict, and human mobility. However, there is a pressing need for more precise data concerning the vulnerability of displaced communities and their hosts to climate-related hazards. Analyzing weather patterns, climate-related disasters, and displacement flows in the EHAGL region can reveal valuable trends. While there is a consensus on climate change influencing displacement triggers such as natural disasters, conflict and food insecurity, assessing its precise impacts remains challenging. Climate data is also essential for risk assessments in the region. Identifying areas at high risk of severe climate impacts can guide planning and interventions, bolstering community resilience and mitigating displacement risks. Furthermore, data is invaluable for impact evaluation, as it can help assessing the effectiveness of policies and interventions addressing climate-induced displacement and specific vulnerabilities of displaced communities. By comparing data before and after interventions, we can determine if efforts have successfully reduced displacement and improved community resilience.

Reliable data also supports evidence-based decision-making which is essential for policy makers to develop strategies that address the root causes of climate-induced displacement in the region, such as investing in climate-resilient infrastructure or supporting livelihood diversification. Anticipating climate-related risks holistically is key in steering the region away from reactive humanitarian responses towards proactive and resilient developmental trajectories. To receive and analyze key data sets, UNHCR will collaborate with national and regional statistical offices, UN Organizations, REC's and research centers given their crucial role in key data collection activities. Technology companies can provide tools and expertise for analyzing large datasets, creating predictive models, and developing early warning systems, helping to prepare for and respond to climate-induced disasters. NGOs, both local and international, including refugee-led organizations, bring extensive on-the-ground experience and can help implementing interventions and reaching communities that larger organizations may find

challenging to access. Engagement with local communities is also crucial as they provide valuable insights into local conditions and needs and are key to implementing and sustaining interventions.

The [Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement](#) by UNHCR and the WBG contributes to the necessary scientific and socio-economic research to foster understanding of [climate change impacts on cross-border movement](#), developing predictive models, and evaluating intervention effectiveness.

Greening the Blue

In the EHAGL region, one of the priority areas for UNHCR's Greening engagement is the solarization of our offices to meet a portion of the electricity needs. This transition to renewable energy sources not only reduces our carbon emissions, but also contributes to cost savings in the long run. The change is driven by a Greening & Sustainability Team that is outposted to the EHAGL region. In 2023, we will solarize the largest emitting offices in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. In 2024, high emission offices in South Sudan and Rwanda will be solarized, followed by offices in Sudan in 2025, should the situation allow. The Greening & Sustainability Team is also working on right sizing and reducing the use of generators in the region.

Furthermore, we are actively exploring the feasibility of transitioning to electric vehicles wherever possible. By gradually replacing conventional vehicles with electric ones, we aim to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and minimize the associated greenhouse gas emissions. This transition aligns with our commitment to sustainable transportation and mitigating the climate impact of our operations. In addition, UNHCR is in the process of installing smart electricity meters in our offices, commonly referred to as "Green Boxes". These meters enable better monitoring and management of electricity consumption, allowing us to identify areas for effective implementation of energy-saving measures. In 2023, the team helped to install Green Boxes in 85 offices in all countries in the EHAGL region, aiming to reach 100 by 2025.



UNHCR's solar-powered pumps provide Kakuma camp residents with clean water. Kenya.

Climate Action Plan for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region

2023 - 2028

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