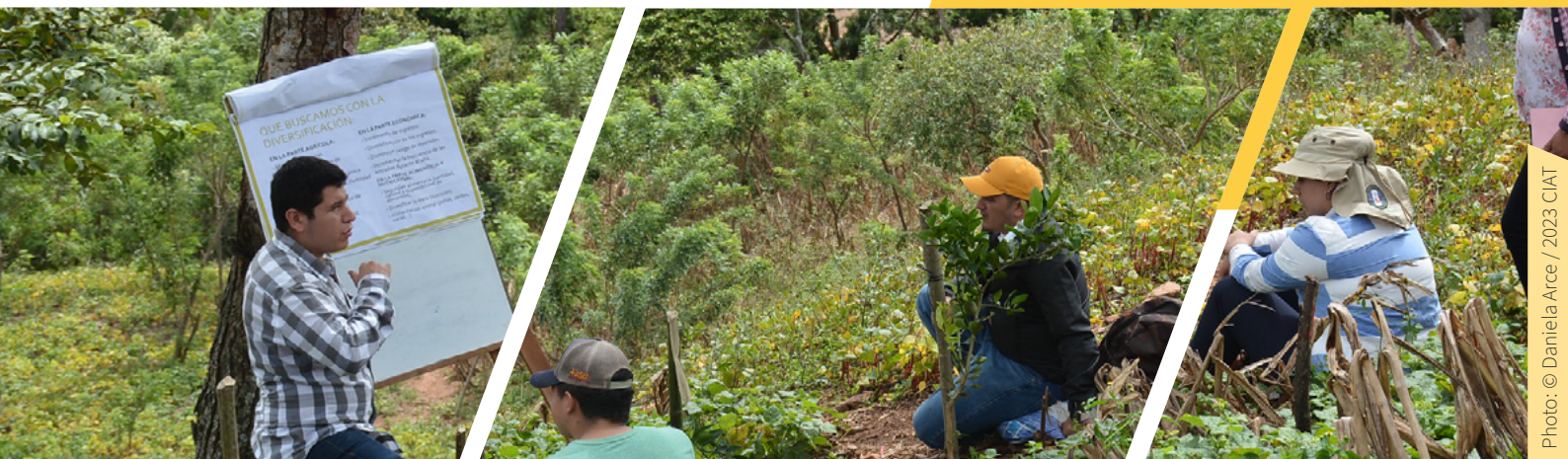




Breaking Silos: Integrated Solutions for Climate Change, Security, and Displacement in Guatemala

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Ensure multisectoral and multidimensional engagement and interaction between the fields and institutions working on climate action, humanitarian responses/displacement management, development, and peacebuilding to end siloed approaches.
- ▶ Ensure a greater implicit integration of how climate adaptation policies and programmes can be designed in ways that consciously address risks and vulnerabilities linked with displacement and effectively untap their potential to prevent it.
- ▶ Produce accessible and actionable scientific evidence on the role of food, land, and water systems in mediating the climate, security, and displacement nexus to help guide and improve the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes, and investments.
- ▶ Build evidence on the impacts of the climate, security, and displacement nexus on gender, indigenous groups, and displaced people, as well as identify local coping capacities and mechanisms for resilience, and comprehensively integrate and articulate this evidence into policymaking.
- ▶ Leverage current networks and multi-stakeholder platforms to support the development, implementation, and scaling of financial interventions, and identify existing climate finance mechanisms that could be targeted for improved conflict-sensitivity to facilitate the emergence of more peace-positive climate funding to address the root causes of displacement.

The climate change, security, and displacement nexus

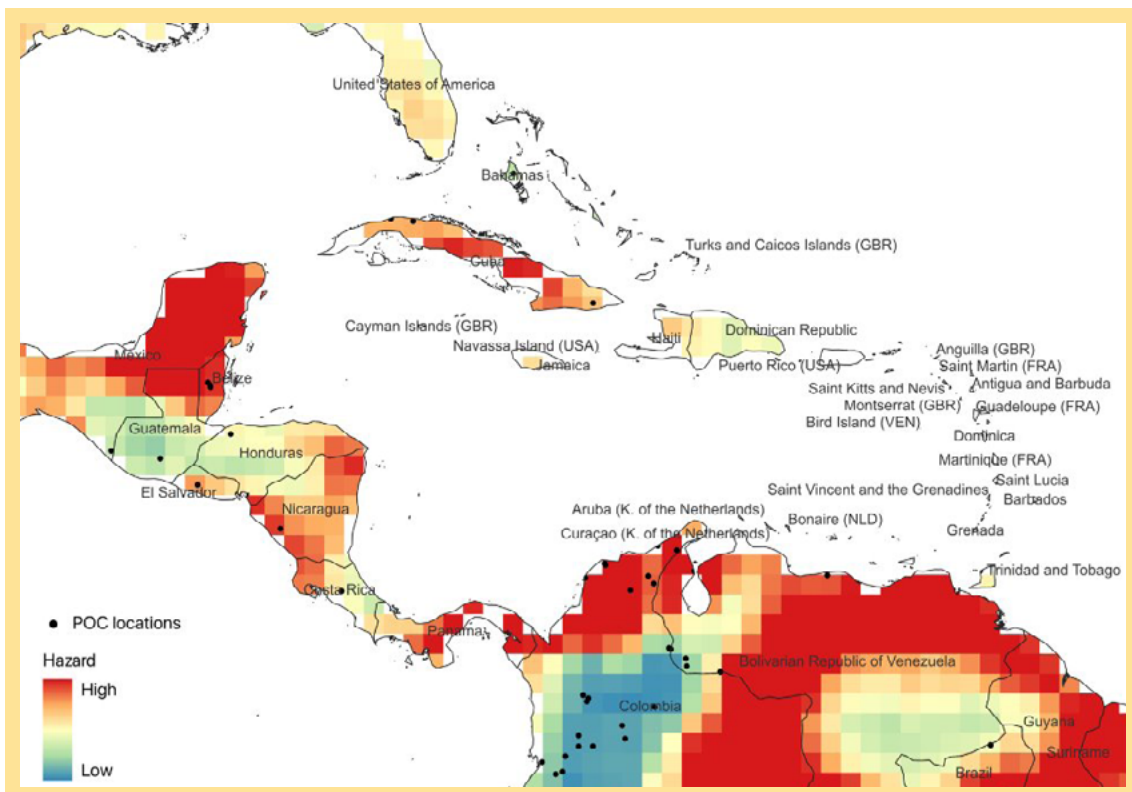
The complex interactions between climate change, security and displacement are creating compounding and cascading effects that increase the vulnerability of populations and pose a great challenge for governments and humanitarian organizations. Conflict, violence, and insecurity have always been considered major drivers of displacement, while more recently, climate change has also been added to the list. Sudden-onset events such as tropical cyclones and floods can destroy people's livelihoods and force them to relocate. At the same time, violence and conflict undermine resilience and the capacity of communities and governments to cope with the effects of climate change. Conversely, climate change can indirectly aggravate violence and conflicts by negatively impacting its root causes, including poverty, inequality, and food insecurity.

Food insecurity is surging in fragile and conflict-affected countries, which often struggle to sustain resilient food, land, and water systems in the face of the climate crisis. Around 1.5 billion people live in these countries where they face significant livelihood challenges, compounded by climate change, environmental degradation, poor governance, weak social cohesion, and a lack of access to basic services (World Bank, 2013). Meanwhile, 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide in 2019, with 80% of them living in countries experiencing acute food insecurity and high levels of malnutrition (UNHCR, 2019).

Migration (generally considered to be voluntary) is an adaptation strategy employed by millions of people with large benefits for destination and receiving areas. Meanwhile, displacement encompasses the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes, in particular, as a result of the effects of armed conflicts, violence, human rights violations or natural or human-made disasters. Low- and middle-income nations are home to 83% of the world's international refugees, many of whom have been displaced for years or even decades (UNHCR, 2023).

The fact that all these risks are interconnected into what some scholars refer to as a “vicious circle” underlines the need to jointly address the climate, humanitarian, and security crises. Despite the growing recognition of these multifaceted and compounding crises, institutions from climate change, humanitarian and peacebuilding fields are still trying to understand how to navigate and act on these issues.

The aim of this policy brief is to firstly, ground the discussion around the climate, security, and displacement nexus in the context of Guatemala to understand how these compounding risks materialize in the country. Secondly, it aims to identify the challenges, gaps and opportunities in scientific evidence, policymaking, programming, and investment, and thirdly, drawing on these findings, it aims to deliver research-based integrated solutions that can contribute to building systemic resilience.



Climate change, security, and displacement in Guatemala

Guatemala is considered one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the region due to its exposure to climate variability and extreme weather events and lack of readiness to cope with these impacts. Increasing average temperatures and rainfall variability, as well as extreme weather events including droughts and tropical storms have had devastating impacts on communities. For example, the recent hurricanes Eta and Iota (2020) left more than 230,000 people displaced (Ober and Schmidtke, 2023).

Guatemala is particularly vulnerable to climate impacts due to its strong dependence on climate-sensitive economic activities for their livelihoods. In particular, agriculture plays a vital role in job creation and exports, accounting for 31% of the total employment and 9.9% of GDP (World Bank, 2019, 2021). These climate impacts undermine rural livelihoods and food security, forcing people to move. Guatemala also faces one of the highest levels of violence in the world, including organized crime, gang violence, and socioenvironmental conflicts among others, which further weaken the country's resilience to climate impacts.

1 Craparo, A.C.W., Minoarivelo, O. H., Basel, A.M., Nguyen, K.T., Dao., H., Birner, J., Yonetani, M., Antinoya, E.S., Sanchez Torres, D.G., Brown, O.D., Pacillo, G., Harper, A., Läderach, P. Extreme compound climate hazards surge by 2040: governance is critical for the world's most vulnerable.

The compounding and interrelated threats of increasing crime and violence, poverty, and other socio-economic factors, as well as climate impacts is leading to a growing number of Guatemalans being forced to leave their homes (Higuera-Florez et al. 2023; Penel et al. 2023). In Guatemala alone, from 2008 to 2022, there were 811,000 internal disaster-related displacements and 8,900 internally conflict-related displacements (IDMC, 2022). Additionally, while many displaced people are able to return to their homes, there are others that remain in prolonged displacement. For instance, a study found that two years after Eta and Iota, only half of the people interviewed had been able to return home (Ober and Schmidtke 2023). Additionally, some people may be victims of involuntary immobility, also known as trapped populations, who can be restricted by economic challenges, extreme climatic conditions and social limitations, such as gender and social norms. These trapped populations are highly vulnerable to worse climatic and socioeconomic conditions, which can lead to compounding vulnerabilities, maladaptive initiatives, human security risks and conflict escalation (Higuera-Florez et al. 2023).

Guatemala however is not just a country of origin, but also a country of transit, destination and of returnees, including asylum seekers and refugees, mostly coming from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti, countries themselves that face high levels of violence and fragility and that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (UNHCR, 2022). In the first nine months of 2021, there were 40,650 Guatemalan returnees, 708 refugees, and 1,472 asylum seekers residing in Guatemala (UNHCR, 2022). Similarly, these groups are also often more at risk from poverty, social marginalization, and limited income options and from accessing critical resources. This can increase their climate vulnerability, as well as increase the risk of gender-based violence, human trafficking, human rights abuses, and violence. Climate change, security and displacement in Guatemala are as such compounding and cascading processes of change that are frequently interconnected through the root causes of vulnerability and fragility. It is important to note however, that despite their vulnerabilities, these groups can also be important agents of change, and can develop positive coping mechanisms to withstand climate shocks.

Blind spots: What are the research gaps to better understand this nexus?

While there is growing evidence on the links between climate, security, and displacement, there are still gaps in the data and research that limit the ability to generate a more comprehensive understanding on this nexus that could help decisionmakers to understand how to navigate and act on these issues.

Research has tended to focus on the relationship in siloes, either through the lens of climate-related displacement, conflict risks on displacement, and more recently climate impacts on conflict risks. Due to these compartmental approaches, there has been limited research on understanding how climate, security, and displacement interplay, and how they can have

cascading impacts on one another, as well as the root causes that expose people's lives to these risks. In addition, there are also silos in the way that data on displacement is collected, as it is either disaggregated into climate related or conflict-related divisions. This has led to a paucity of information and capacity to produce analysis on the interactions between climate change, conflict, and displacement outcomes, especially in conflict-affected contexts (Peters et al., 2021).

Evidence on the links between climate-related disasters and displacement is also mostly focused on rapid-onset extreme events such as flooding and hurricanes, which often have a direct impact on people's lives and is therefore easier to generate evidence on displacement. However, climate change also contributes to slow-onset events such as changing temperatures and rainfall variability, which have an indirect relationship between climate variability and displacement, and can slowly erode people's livelihoods and resources. Due to the difficulty of tracking these more gradual events and their interlinkages with other vulnerabilities, there is less information on this causal link.

Despite advances made, the links between climate-related displacement and that of climate, security, and displacement risks are not yet fully understood. While there is growing evidence that illustrates that climate-related displacement processes, and security risks are closely linked to gender dynamics and that adaptation and resilience strategies are also gendered, there is a lack of data and analysis that focuses on identifying how these interrelated risks play out differently according to gender roles (Peters et al., 2021). Similarly, there is a lack of disaggregated data and analysis on how it impacts indigenous communities, children, and trapped populations, as well as how these actors can act as agents of change.

In addition to the limited data and analysis on the complex interactions between climate, conflict, and displacement, there is also a lack of research on how climate adaptation and resilience can prevent and mitigate the impacts of climate change, reducing climate-related drivers of conflict and displacement. As there are systemic risks, there are also systemic solutions where building resilience to one risk can similarly increase resilience to other risks.

Lastly, there is a lack of focus on countries in Central America such as Guatemala, where there are not necessarily protracted crises, but that are highly environmentally vulnerable and in fragile contexts. Information on Guatemala on this nexus is further undermined due to limited comprehensive data on climate impacts and displacement, as there is a lack of data collection on internal displacement (Ober and Schmidtke 2023).

“Due to these compartmental approaches, there has been limited research on understanding how climate, security, and displacement interplay, and how they can have cascading impacts on one another, as well as the root causes that expose people's lives to these risks.”

What are the gaps in policy making, programming, and finance vis a vis the nexus?

Despite the growing international recognition of these multifaceted and compounding risks, institutions from climate action, humanitarian / displacement management, development and peacebuilding are still working in siloes with little cross-fertilization. Although there has been growing interest on the topic, as illustrated by the two previous National Forums on Migration and Climate Change, there is a need to expand and deepen the scope of conversations to integrate actors from other fields such as displacement management, peacebuilding, and agriculture.

Due to the lack of institutional cross-fertilization, climate adaptation policies and programmatic interventions are not consciously and clearly being articulated to address the risks and vulnerabilities linked to displacement as well as their potential to prevent it. Similarly, programming and policy work is also not sufficiently focused on building resilience to mitigate the effects of displacement due to slow-onset climate impacts. In addition, with relation to displacement, peace and conflict-related analyses are not systematically integrated into climate and environment-related policies, while climate-related measures are not consistently incorporated into peace and conflict-related policies.

With regards to vulnerable groups such as women, children, indigenous communities, displaced and marginalized populations such as the Garifuna, the specific differentiated impacts that climate change has on these groups vis a vis the climate, security, and displacement nexus are not comprehensively integrated and articulated in policymaking and programming, which is essential to support the empowerment of these vulnerable groups.

Lastly, interconnected with these gaps in policymaking and programming work on this nexus, while there is clearly growing interest in this area from donors, there are relatively few funding instruments that are focused on the interactions among climate, conflict, and displacement. Instead, much of the funding is aligned towards two of the three themes, rather than the interactions among all three.

Opportunities for addressing interconnected risks and strengthening integrated solutions

There is a great opportunity to bridge long-term sustainability and resilience into effective immediate responses to climate change, conflict, and displacement. It is essential that, while meeting humanitarian needs and ensuring the rights of displaced populations, long-term durable solutions that build resilience, sustainable livelihoods, foster peace, and address root causes of vulnerability are implemented. These types of interventions, guided by systemic thinking that cut across traditional boundaries and address underlying vulnerabilities and capacities, contribute to ensuring that solutions to displacement are durable and sustainable and go beyond short-term assistance. It is also crucial that these solutions avoid the use of over-securitization narratives on the climate, security and displacement nexus and focus on narratives and solutions around people's experiences, adaptation mechanisms, and coping strategies.

There is also an increased amount of evidence on the role that food, land, and water systems can play in mediating these interactions between climate vulnerabilities, peace and security dynamics, and displacement. There is therefore a great potential to leverage food, land, and water systems transformation to provide durable solutions that prevent prolonged displacement, allow for local integration, resettlement, or voluntary returns, or provide safe, orderly, and regular migration options. This transformation of food, land and water systems will enable anticipatory action, bridge humanitarian responses and development, and contribute to security and peacebuilding, while also harnessing biodiversity and sustainability.

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The Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT and the CGIAR's approach and position

The Alliance of Bioversity and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) has worked for decades in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and malnutrition to deliver research-based solutions that harness agricultural biodiversity and sustainably transform food systems to improve people's lives. The growing evidence on the interlinkages between climate change, food security, human mobility, conflict, and security led the creation of the CGIAR FOCUS Climate Security with the aim of aligning evidence from the realms of climate, land, water, and food systems science with peacebuilding

efforts already underway that address conflict through evidence-based environmental, political, and socio-economic solutions.

The CGIAR (of which the Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT is part of) has also begun participating in different thematic initiatives, delivering research-based solutions to address the climate change, security, and displacement nexus through CGIAR's expertise, experience, and knowledge on natural resources and climate-sensitive livelihoods, which play a crucial role in these settings. In line with this, CGIAR launched in 2023 a new initiative on Fragility, Conflict, and Migration (FCM), which aims to address challenges to livelihood, food, and climate security faced by some of the most vulnerable populations worldwide. The FCM Initiative focuses on building climate resilience, promoting gender equity, and fostering social inclusion. It aims to enhance the resilience of food, land, and water systems in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where migration-related challenges are prevalent. By taking 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 in these settings.

The solid experience and expertise of the Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT and CGIAR on climate, land, water, and food systems science as well as its well-established multidisciplinary approaches makes it a strategic partner for delivering research-based integrated solutions that contribute to building systemic resilience by addressing climate, humanitarian, and security crises.

UNHCR's approach and position²

UNHCR's mandate and leadership role for providing international protection under its 1950 Statute relates to three broad categories of people who have international protection needs in the context of climate change. First, people who are refugees under the 1951 Convention definition when they flee conflict or violence caused or exacerbated by the effects of climate change and disaster, 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 Convention grounds arise. Second, this encompasses refugees within wider regional definitions, as the one in the Cartagena Declaration – including notably those compelled to leave their countries in the context of events or circumstances seriously disturbing public order related to climate change or disaster. Thirdly, 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.

The risks of statelessness can increase when people move, including during displacement situations in the context of climate change and disasters. Statelessness may result where individuals are unable to prove their nationality due to loss of or inability to replace

² Overview of Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030, UNHCR.

documentation, including in the context of disasters. People who are already stateless face specific and heightened risks because of pre-existing vulnerabilities and potential exclusion from protective measures and critical support services, such as climate mitigation measures, disaster relief or healthcare, that are only available to those who are citizens or who have a recognized legal status. In most cases, they have few or no means to prepare for, withstand and recover from climatic shocks and stresses.

In many places, forcibly displaced, returning refugees, stateless people and the communities that host them have limited access to environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient services and resources such as water, food and energy. Without these services and support, these populations may face increased vulnerabilities and protection needs, in turn, resulting in harmful coping mechanisms and risky practices, including for women and girls, practices such as longer walks to fetch firewood and water. Such practices may also further degrade local ecosystems and habitats, through deforestation or water scarcity, compounding the impacts of climate change. Forcibly displaced, returned and stateless people, especially women and girls, are often disproportionately impacted when resources become scarce and require a doubling down of efforts to provide community-based protection and environmentally sustainable services.

The increased pressure in these areas on natural resources, especially land, forests and water, combined with increased frequency of climate shocks (such as droughts, floods, cyclones, heatwaves or other weather events) and gradual, slow-onset stresses (such as desertification, erosion, glacial melt and sea level rise) further reduce the capacities of these local communities to build their resilience and ensure their self-reliance. This situation is exacerbated by their limited access to national early warning and preparedness efforts, which limits their means to prepare for, withstand and recover from the impacts of climate change. Livelihoods and social protection schemes need to transform quickly, as, without the means to prepare for, withstand, recover and adapt to increasing climate shocks and stresses, these communities and their hosts increasingly rely on short-term humanitarian assistance and systems for the provision of basic subsistence. Protection services need to be reinforced to ensure that all people, including women and girls, people with disabilities, and people in vulnerable situations, are able to not just cope with, but also thrive in the face of these challenges.

This situation is well-acknowledged by the global community as an urgent, critical issue. Yet, forcibly displaced and stateless people, along with their host communities, often fall through the cracks in terms of governments' plans for climate change adaptation and sustainable development. While development and climate financing instruments and arrangements remain inadequate to address the huge challenges faced in climate-vulnerable developing countries, those in place offer an important opportunity to tackle these challenges in a way that is concerted, inclusive and necessary to ensure the most affected communities, including displaced people and their hosts, are not left behind.

Recommendations

Despite the growing recognition of these multifaceted and compounding crises, institutions from climate change, humanitarian and peacebuilding fields are still trying to understand how to navigate and act on these issues. This policy brief lists a series of recommendations that can help to overcome these problems including the following:

- A) Ensure multisectoral and multidimensional engagement and interaction between the fields and institutions working on climate action, humanitarian responses/displacement management, development, and peacebuilding to end siloed approaches. This will ensure that interventions account for and jointly address the multiple dimensions of risks and vulnerabilities linked with displacement, including economic, social, political, and environmental factors.
- B) Develop multiscale partnerships that connect and coordinate the work of governments, regional bodies, UN agencies, research centers and local organizations to ensure effective collaboration across multiple scales and sectors, creating an enabling environment where localized processes can expand to impact larger geographies in the country.
- C) Ensure a greater implicit integration of how climate adaptation policies and programmes can be designed in ways that consciously address risks and vulnerabilities linked with displacement and effectively untap their potential to prevent it.
- D) Produce accessible and actionable scientific evidence on the role of food, land, and water systems in mediating the climate, security, and displacement nexus to help guide and improve the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes, and investments.
- E) Build evidence on the impacts of the climate, security, and displacement nexus on gender, indigenous groups, and displaced people, as well as identify local coping capacities and mechanisms for resilience, and comprehensively integrate and articulate this evidence into policymaking.
- F) Leverage current networks and multi-stakeholder platforms to support the development, implementation, and scaling of financial interventions, and identify existing climate finance mechanisms that could be targeted for improved conflict-sensitivity to facilitate the emergence of more peace-positive climate funding to address the root causes of displacement.

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AUTHORS

Ignacio Madurga-Lopez and Charlotte Penel

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CONTACT

Focal point in Latin America of the CGIAR FOCUS Climate Security:

i.madurga@cgiar.org

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