

ABSTRACT

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Reducing Disaster Displacement Risk in Southern Africa: Opportunities and Challenges

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The 2014-2016 El Nino-related drought, the 2014 Malawi floods, and the 2017 Cyclone Dineo are examples of disasters that have displaced hundreds of thousands of people across the Southern African region in the recent years. Most disaster responses so far have been reactive rather than preemptive, highlighting the need to promote resilience and preparedness in the face of both slow-onset and sudden-onset disasters. Whilst on the global level governance frameworks are being pushed to improve the integration of climate and disaster-induced displacement across the world (e.g. the Platform for Disaster Displacement, the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss & Damage's Task Force on Displacement, the soon-to-be-adopted Global Compact on Migration, as well as global instruments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction - SFDRR), implementation at the local and regional scales remains slow and challenging.

This paper will take stock of the initiatives that have been introduced at the national and regional levels to prevent and better manage disaster displacement in the Southern African region, measure their success, and interrogate the opportunity to further mainstream displacement into the four priorities for action of the SFDRR, the underlying objectives being to improve the decision-making capacity of policy-makers and practitioners in the sub-region, as well as to reduce the overall vulnerability of Southern African populations to disaster risk.

This paper will include a desk study and qualitative interviews with representatives from national and local governments, regional and international organisations, as well as the research community. It will provide concrete recommendations on how the SADC region could best prepare evacuations, implement early warning systems and document disaster displacement, as well as improve the coordination of national and regional disaster risk reduction mechanisms (strategies and policies) as far as human mobility is concerned. This paper will further seek to advocate for the comprehensive integration of displaced populations throughout the disaster risk management cycle, in order to build the resilience of both displaced people and their host communities across SADC.

Keywords: Disasters; Displacement; Resilience; Human Mobility; Regional Cooperation