



Norwegian University
of Life Sciences



COURTING
CATASTROPHE?

Humanitarian Policy and
Practice in a Changing Climate

Key questions and dilemmas in the interface between humanitarian aid and climate change adaptation

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Number of people displaced by conflict 'equivalent to UK population of 65m'

Report by World Bank and UN highlights the scale and economic impact of displacement caused by conflict worldwide



Displaced people in South Sudan queue up to be registered by UN agencies. Photograph: Albert Gonzalez Farran/AFP/Getty Images

The [World Bank](#) and the United Nations have highlighted the impact of conflicts on civilians in a report showing that the number of displaced people around the globe is equivalent to the UK's population of 65 million.

A study launched jointly by the Bank and the [UN Refugee Agency](#) (UNHCR) shows that the root of the problem are 10 conflicts responsible for the majority of forced displacement every year for the past quarter of a century.

The Guardian 16 September 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/sep/15/number-of-people-displaced-by-conflict-equivalent-to-uk-population-of-65m>
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/nov/25/arctic-ice-melt-trigger-uncontrollable-climate-change-global-level>

Arctic ice melt could trigger uncontrollable climate change at global level

Scientists warn increasingly rapid melting could trigger polar 'tipping points' with catastrophic consequences felt as far away as the Indian Ocean



How melting Arctic ice could cause uncontrollable climate change

Arctic scientists have warned that the increasingly rapid melting of the ice cap risks triggering 19 "tipping points" in the region that could have catastrophic consequences around the globe.

The [Arctic Resilience Report](#) found that the effects of Arctic warming could be felt as far away as the Indian Ocean, in a stark warning that changes in the region could cause uncontrollable climate change at a global level.

The Guardian 25 November 2016.

Courting Catastrophe: Humanitarian Policy and Practice in a Changing Climate (2011-2016)

- A Noragric led collaborative project between international practitioner and research institutions
- Collaborating institutions include the Comsats Institute of Information Technology, the Norwegian Red Cross, the Red Cross Climate Centre (the Netherlands), Mekelle University (Ethiopia), the Development Fund, and IDS (Institute for Development Studies in Brighton)
- Funded by the Research Council of Norway, NORGLOBAL-HUMPOL programme

Climate change intersects with humanitarian crises and how they are handled in four main ways:

- *First*, many disasters are climate-related



Pakistan floods, 2010
6 million left homeless

- *Second*, climate change may contribute to social changes such as poverty patterns that influence the nature of humanitarian crises;



- *Third, how a non-climatic disaster is handled is critical for how vulnerable a community may be to future climate events; and*

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36102058>

Nepal earthquake: Patience wearing thin one year on



Justin Rowlatt
South Asia correspondent

25 April 2016 | Asia



AP

A year after the earthquake and Nepal is still a country of tarpaulins, tents and tin-roofed shacks.

Nepal quake

- *Fourth*, humanitarian actions influence any move towards climate resilient development pathways.



From incremental to transformative adaptation

- ***Incremental adaptation*** Adaptation actions where the central aim is to maintain the essence and integrity of a system or process at a given scale.
- ***Transformational adaptation*** Adaptation that changes the fundamental attributes of a system in response to climate and its effects
- **Transformation:** A change in the fundamental attributes of natural and human systems.
- **Climate resilient development pathways:** Development trajectories that combine adaptation and mitigation to realize the goal of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is interpreted as delivering improved human well-being while sustaining environmental services. It also stresses equitable economic development.

(IPCC WGII glossary 2014, IPCC WGII, ch 20, p. 1104)

Identifying opportunities for transformation

- Changes in practices, in decisionmaking structures, and in values, worldviews and problem understandings must take place at the same time



The need to rethink climate change adaptation in humanitarian aid

- Transformation of our own organisations as much as transforming the practices of ‘vulnerable populations’
- Making space for multiple vulnerability knowledges
- A need to go beyond thinking about a particular practical action – to thinking about the process behind that particular action

