



ABU DHABI
SUSTAINABILITY WEEK

CLIMATE ACTION AND DISPLACEMENT



Roundtable - Abu Dhabi

Hosted by

MASDAR 

Executive Summary

Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) hosted distinguished leaders from a diverse range of countries and organizations for a Roundtable on Climate Change & Displacement.



The Roundtable focused on the urgent matter of displacement resulting from climate change, including natural disasters.

The discussion holds particular significance for the UAE, as it prepares to host a COP28 focused on actions and outcomes, emphasizing the crucial need for leaders to unite in supporting and nurturing efforts to address these challenges. The UNHCR is the UN agency mandated to protect refugees and communities displaced from conflicts, water and resource scarcity, and drought. The purpose of convening this Roundtable was to gather key stakeholders in this field, facilitate a dialogue and accelerate progress with addressing the climate causes of displacement. The Roundtable participants emphasized the crucial involvement of UNHCR in COP28, recognized the significant roles of infrastructure and partnerships, impact of

climate change on communities and populations. Education, policy frameworks, and tailored aid were identified as critical factors behind successful strategies to address the impact of climate change- while collaboration, awareness, and inclusivity were highlighted as essential components of action to support displaced communities. The industry experts agreed on the importance of proactive planning and preparedness, stressing the importance of establishing green jobs to support development and drive socioeconomic progress. Mobilizing resources and fostering global collaboration were identified as indispensable for effective and impactful action.

UNHCR - having a voice at COP28

Displacement is the theme and focus of UNHCR at COP28 this year, and the discussions will provide a platform for refugees to share challenges faced by their communities and explore potential solutions. Each day of the event will address specific themes such as relief, recovery, education, water, food, energy, finance, and gender equality. Although Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are prone to an increasing occurrence of droughts, floods, and cyclones, it's important to recognize that these occurrences are not limited to those regions alone. Recent events in Europe, such as the wildfires in Spain and France, have provided a stark example of the climate challenges faced by every region in the world. Raising awareness across all areas of society, from governments and businesses to local communities and students (youth?), is imperative to drive collective action and deliver tangible progress in addressing the impact of climate change on society.



The Crucial Role of Infrastructure

Developing adequate infrastructure to prepare countries and safeguard communities from the rising threat of climate change is a cornerstone of effective climate adaptation. A lack of robust physical infrastructure in rural areas, often compounded by limited access to digital infrastructure and technologies poses a barrier to implementing effective disaster response measures. It is therefore essential that funding and financing is made available to support countries and vulnerable regions to develop climate-resilient infrastructure that is designed, built, and operated in the correct way to adapt to changing weather patterns and better prepare communities to respond and recover from disruptions caused by climate change. Adequate planning, and collaboration from governments and regulators to housing associations and

real estate developers, is essential to ensure infrastructure and housing can withstand the impacts of changing climatic conditions.

Governments have a vital role to play in addressing this issue by raising awareness, but more importantly by prioritizing housing-related initiatives and policies. One area of increasing focus for the UNHCR is ensuring safe and resilient housing for those in hot climate zones affected by climate change. Developing safe and climate resilient housing, supported by sustainable energy supplies is of utmost importance for Africa and other regions with hot climates.

Participants at the roundtable agreed that funding for adaptation efforts needs more attention. Approximately 80% of refugees seek shelter in developing nations, which often lack the resources and capacity for effective adaptation.

The UNHCR is committed to ensuring the well-being of refugees and host communities in developing countries.

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to disasters has significantly increased in recent years. Approximately 10% of 71 million IDPs were displaced by disasters, a 45% increase compared to the previous year.

Countries such as Pakistan are experiencing increasing occurrences of floods and cyclones, with the frequency of such disasters expected to

rise sharply in the next two decades. Addressing how to prepare for and respond to these situations, including the possibility of relocating communities to safer areas, must form a critical part of government policy.

At COP28, the UAE is dedicating a day to relief, peace, and health. This unprecedented step presents a valuable opportunity for all stakeholders, including climate activists and those concerned with displacement and humanitarian issues to raise awareness and support communities facing the harsh realities of climate change and forced displacement.



The Power of Partnerships and Financial Models

Private sector partnerships have played a critical role in implementing renewable projects, underscoring the need to prioritize climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in response to climate displacements. In this pursuit, collaborative opportunities and joint infrastructure development are crucial. An exemplary case highlighting the significance of partnerships is the UAE, which aims to become a regional leader in developing renewable energy and electric vehicles. However, the country has recently encountered some barriers to progress - such as limited grid infrastructure, complex regulatory approval processes and contractual and legal frameworks. Overcoming these obstacles necessitates engaging with relevant authorities, implementing mandatory ESG reporting requirements, and introducing carbon taxation to incentivize emission reduction without unduly burdening profit-making companies.

By adopting a multifaceted approach, governments and the private sector can effectively address climate change challenges and pave the way for sustainable progress. In the context of the refugee crisis, there has been significant short-term financial support, but long-term solutions that promote self-sufficiency and economic sustainability are essential. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as carbon taxation and blended financing models that empower individuals to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Finding economically sustainable business models remains pivotal in addressing the refugee crisis and ensuring lasting positive impact. The discussion of establishing sufficient business models in the climate financing space is gaining momentum, including the establishment of a fund for loss and damage during COP27. Roundtable participants agreed swift action and collaboration between governments and the financial sector is required to develop business models that support communities affected by climate change.

The Crucial Role of Education in Tackling Climate-Related Challenges

The important role of education, from children to adults, in addressing climate-related challenges cannot be overstated. By instilling environmental consciousness from an early age, we can cultivate a mindset that transcends generations, promoting knowledge sharing. Educational initiatives should not only target those who are already well-informed, but communities with limited access to information and resources. Engaging with these communities is essential, including promoting alternatives to traditional fuels such as electric generators. To make a meaningful impact, collective efforts and goal alignment are necessary from all stakeholders, including countries, agencies, and the private sector. By demonstrating tangible successes and gaining buy-in from these key players, a sense of shared responsibility and commitment can be fostered.

Advancing Collective Action for Long-Term Sustainable Solutions

To tackle the looming challenge of the 200 million people projected to be displaced by climate change by 2050, collective action is the only way forward. Countries such as Lebanon and Egypt present complex scenarios, but they provide examples of countries which can benefit significantly from the adoption of sustainable solutions. Notably, Lebanon has made progress with the installation of numerous solar panels on rooftops, demonstrating the country's potential to overcome chronic power shortages.

Accelerating the adoption of sustainable technologies in developing regions such as Africa requires partnerships between the public and private sectors, including at a local and community level, to drive innovation and provide financial solutions. The establishment of thematic working groups focused on adaptation, mitigation, litigation, and education can drive specific projects addressing the unique challenges of climate-induced displacement. Small meetings can refine project ideas, aiming for tangible

outcomes and collective action, and the involvement of energy companies and relevant stakeholders will enhance the impact of these initiatives. Through collective efforts, knowledge-sharing, and targeted interventions, we can make significant progress in addressing the challenges faced by vulnerable populations and achieving a resilient and equitable future.



Corporate Engagement - Fostering Shared Responsibility for Impactful Change

Addressing climate displacement requires significant corporate action. Establishing platforms to enable businesses to share knowledge and facilitate discussions on challenges, best practices and innovative solutions can enable business to contribute more effectively to addressing and responding to the impacts of climate change and displacement.

Moreover, we need to deepen our understanding of the effects businesses have on climate change. By being transparent and demonstrating accountability, particularly in the face of potential policy frameworks with global impact, businesses can spur action towards sustainable solutions and align operations with sustainability goals. Utilizing appropriate tools and frameworks, businesses can effectively shed light on the issue of displacement within their operations and drive positive change.



Sustainability Must Be at the Core of Refugee Projects

To create a lasting impact, it is imperative that sustainability forms a core tenant of all refugee projects. While immediate assistance, such as providing cash aid, plays a vital role during emergency situations, we must shift our focus towards longer-term sustainable solutions as the emergency stabilizes. This necessitates adopting a systemic approach that considers the broader social, economic, and environmental factors influencing the displacement crisis. By embracing a vision of sustainability and recognizing the interconnections between different aspects of the crisis, we can develop holistic solutions that

address immediate needs while paving the way for long-term resilience. It is not enough to address the symptoms; we must also tackle the underlying causes and build a framework that promotes self-sufficiency and long-lasting positive change.

Within the realm of refugee projects, integrating sustainability considerations should form a key objective in planning and implementation processes. This involves designing initiatives that not only provide immediate relief but also empower individuals and communities to thrive in the long run. It encompasses strategies that promote environmentally conscious practices, foster economic opportunities, and prioritize social well-being.

Empowering Displaced Communities through Long-Term Planning and Skill Training

Comprehensive assessment and long-term planning are essential to provide effective solutions for displaced communities. Empowering individuals, especially women, through skills training and income-generating activities has shown positive outcomes. In Jordan, women have been trained to create products that not only benefit their families but the community and local economy.

Similarly, in India, solar panel installations have facilitated women's engagement in small-scale businesses. These initiatives foster self-reliance and create sustainable livelihoods that support development across communities.

Investors focused solely on short-term gains risk overlooking the broader context and the needs of beneficiaries. Involving beneficiaries in project design, and considering their perspectives and experiences, shapes solutions that benefit all parties. Prioritizing self-sufficiency and long-term success over dependency should ensure that projects can effectively support displaced communities.

Importance of Planning and Preparedness

To effectively combat climate change and safeguard vulnerable communities, a comprehensive pre-planned approach integrating adaptation and mitigation measures is of utmost importance, particularly in regions like Africa where droughts and floods pose significant challenges. Collaborative planning and implementation of policies and measures that target the impact of climate change in high-risk areas can limit the impact of displacement when crises occur. This comprehensive approach should encompass strategies that build resilience in vulnerable regions, reducing the likelihood and severity of future disasters. It involves developing and implementing initiatives such as early warning systems, infrastructure improvements, land-use planning, and natural resource management.



Navigating Job Displacement through Green Jobs

The prioritization of creating green jobs has gained significant momentum across the world, with the transition to a green economy offering a significant opportunity for developing nations. The primary objective is to assist individuals at risk of job displacement due to decarbonization by equipping them with the essential competencies needed for the growing green job sector. A key focus is on re-skilling and upskilling initiatives, with particular emphasis on countries like India, where a significant demographic dividend exists. The aim is to prepare this demographic cohort to meet the demands of the new economy, enhancing their preparedness and integration into the expanding green job market.

Successful implementation of these initiatives requires collaboration and an unwavering commitment to actively support the growth of green jobs. By attending training and upskilling programs, individuals can acquire the expertise and knowledge essential for thriving in the dynamic landscape of emerging green economies. Beyond refugees, there is an opportunity to address challenges associated with job loss and adaptation in the face of environmental changes within broader communities. This could involve providing support and resources to both refugee and host communities, fostering resilience, and enabling individuals to navigate potential transitions.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of projects, we must consider the needs of current workforces, future generations, and students in educational institutions. By collectively leveraging our expertise, whether technical or in human resources, we can create an ecosystem that supports the growth of green jobs and fosters sustainable economies.



Mobilizing Financial and Legal Resources

Financing is central to the discussion of climate change and displacement. It requires a cross-border, society-wide approach engaging a diverse group of stakeholders. While localized solutions in specific communities like Pakistan, Nigeria, or Kenya are important, global collaboration is essential to tackle the magnitude of the issue. For long-term refugee solutions, immediate financing serves as a short-term remedy. However, a comprehensive approach is needed to protect the rights of refugees and displaced communities.

A comprehensive approach must establish adequate local and regional policies to address climate displacement challenges and support host communities, safeguarding the rights of displaced populations, and addressing loss and damage due to climate change. Tailored localized support is crucial in adaptation, empowering vulnerable communities and providing financial assistance to increase resilience.

Flexible funding mechanisms are necessary to address the wide range of challenges posed by climate change, with a focus on prioritizing the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Private sector engagement, collaboration with philanthropic organizations, and leveraging existing structures like the United Nations Global Compact and local networks are vital for mobilizing financial resources and supporting climate resilience.

Moreover, the legal industry, through pro-bono work, can play a critical role in promoting awareness of environmental, social, and governance considerations among international and UAE-based companies to support the development of solutions to support displaced communities and refugees.

Infrastructure development and practical solutions are necessary for vulnerable communities like those in Sudan to mitigate risks of climate change and improve living conditions. By addressing the financing gap, strengthening legal frameworks, promoting resilience, and fostering collaboration, we can deliver solutions that support communities affected by climate-induced displacement.



The Importance of Pilot Projects

The importance of implementing pilot projects in specific countries to drive progress in developing successful solutions to climate change and displacement was unanimously acknowledged by the participants. It was agreed that pilot studies that provide tangible results and outcomes are essential in evaluating whether the projects can be replicated and upscaled.

In practice, the pilot project would involve conducting a comprehensive heat mapping exercise to identify suitable locations and stakeholders for collaboration. This exercise aims to educate and raise awareness among stakeholders, fostering an action-oriented mindset. Concrete outcomes, such as economic impacts and reductions in emissions, will serve as measures of the project's success and will inspire broader support.

To effectively demonstrate viability and impact, it was agreed that starting with smaller-scale initiatives in one or two regions is a prudent approach. This gradual expansion allows for the accumulation of evidence and development of awareness initiatives, which are key to garnering support for sustainable solutions and increasing understanding of the challenges related to climate displacement.

Additionally, identifying and implementing pilot projects that align with the interests of all stakeholders was identified by participants as a priority. It was agreed that such projects should not only address immediate needs of stakeholders but also have a lasting impact, delivering multiple benefits and demonstrating the potential for scalability and replication. The involvement of the private sector and the creation of media opportunities surrounding these pilots can help generate awareness and support for similar initiatives. By showcasing successful pilot projects, we can advocate for more comprehensive and sustainable approaches to address the complex challenges of climate change and displacement.

In terms of adaptation, it was emphasized that being able to deliver ideas with tangible results and concrete actions on the ground is crucial. Each entity or organization within the larger group has the potential to contribute their expertise, funding, resources, or support to various projects. This can involve lending expertise, funding specific initiatives, providing necessary resources, or any other form of contribution that aligns with their capabilities. The key lies in identifying and defining the role that each entity can play in piloting or implementing these projects and complementing each other in filling all required roles.

Building towards COP28:

As we build towards COP28, participants agreed it is crucial to identify projects of interest and areas where participants can actively contribute. During the roundtable, several key projects were identified, including: the implementation of microgrids for refugees, the development of portable water systems, the construction of sustainable schools, and the establishment of distributed energy sources. Additionally, participants expressed their interest in involvement through supporting initiatives for skilling and quality education, raising corporate awareness on climate issues, and providing pro-bono support based on expertise and operational needs.



PROJECTS OF INTEREST: To address the pressing challenges of climate-induced displacement, participants expressed enthusiasm for the following projects:



Implementing Microgrids for Refugees: Microgrids offer a sustainable energy solution for refugee camps, providing reliable and clean electricity. By supporting these projects, participants can improve the living conditions and opportunities for refugees, enabling them to access energy for education, healthcare, and livelihood activities.



Developing Portable Water Systems: Access to clean water is a fundamental need, especially in refugee settings. Developing portable water systems ensures a sustainable and safe water supply, enhancing health and well-being. This project can significantly improve the quality of life for displaced populations.



Constructing Sustainable Schools: Education plays a crucial role in empowering refugees and providing them with a brighter future. The construction of sustainable schools can create safe and environmentally friendly learning environments, promoting education as a tool for resilience and empowerment.



Establishing Distributed Energy Sources: Establishing distributed energy sources enables the decentralization of power generation, making communities more resilient and less reliant on grid connections. This project supports the transition to renewable energy and enhances energy access for vulnerable populations.

AREAS OF INTEREST FOR INVOLVEMENT: Participants expressed their willingness to contribute to the following areas:



Supporting Skill Development and Quality Education: Participants recognized the importance of providing quality education and skill development for refugees. By supporting initiatives in this area, refugees can be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to access green jobs, fostering economic opportunities and resilience.



Creating Corporate Awareness on Climate: Participants emphasized the need to raise corporate awareness on climate issues. By engaging businesses and inviting their involvement, we can drive sustainable practices, innovation, and investments that contribute to a low-carbon future.



Providing pro-bono Support: Participants offered their expertise and resources to provide pro-bono support based on the operational needs identified by relevant offices and operations. This support can range from legal advice to technical assistance, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing climate-induced displacement.

Roundtable Participants

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Partners

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Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) is a global initiative championed by the UAE and its clean energy powerhouse Masdar to accelerate sustainable development and advance economic, social and environmental progress.

Established in 2008, ADSW provides a global platform for all who have a stake in the future of our planet. ADSW brings together leaders from across governments, the private sector and civil society, to discuss and engage on bold climate action and the innovations that will ensure a sustainable world for future generations.

ADSW is not only a premier convenor for global dialogue, but a catalyst for concrete results, providing multi-stakeholder platforms where thought leadership can evolve into thoughtful action.



Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar) is the UAE's clean energy champion and one of the largest companies of its kind in the world, advancing the development and deployment of renewable energy and green hydrogen technologies to address global sustainability challenges.

Established in 2006, Masdar is today active in over 40 countries, helping them to achieve their clean energy objectives and advance sustainable development. Masdar is jointly owned by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), Mubadala Investment Company (Mubadala), and Abu Dhabi National Energy Company (TAQA), and under this ownership the company is targeting a renewable energy portfolio capacity of at least 100 gigawatts (GW) by 2030 and an annual green hydrogen production capacity of up to 1 million tons by the same year.



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