**The Latin-American and Caribbean Internally Displaced Persons Enigma: An inquiry of natural disasters and climate change related displacements in The Bahamas, Honduras, Peru and Brazil**

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**Abstract:** *This article seeks to approach internal displacement induced by climate change related disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean through four local analyses. The general objective of the work is to cover how the four elected countries - The Bahamas, Honduras, Peru and Brazil - deal with this type of internal displacement legally and pragmatically, in order to understand if it’s a significant issue to local Governments or not. Specifically, it aims to expose how different groups of people experience internal displacement in each of the settings and if public policies consider those individualizations. Finally, this is a qualitative research developed as a bibliographic study through descriptive and documental techniques.*

**Key words:** Climate change; Internal Displacement; Natural Disasters.

### **1. Introduction**

Notably, when people think about forced migration they usually remember refugees, since their rights are internationally recognized and they face overlapping vulnerabilities. However, people displaced within their home countries, that is: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) receive much less attention, specially those forced to evade their homes due to floods, hurricanes, landslides or the construction of the so-called development projects, such as dams or highways, even though they face similar challenges than refugees. Yet, the public policies and programs designed to meet their needs are extremely scarce (Observatório de Migrações Forçadas, n.d.). Nevertheless, as of this article, displacement refers to the involuntary movement of people, which occurs when the ability to remain is physically removed. It diverges from migration for that exact reason: migrants relocate voluntarily and IDPs don’t have any degree of ‘choice’ (Muggah 2015, 223).

Indeed, in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), internal displacement has been an issue for many decades. Between its historical origins the domestic armed conflicts are determinant, mainly through the final years of the 1970s until the 90s in countries throughout Central America and South America, such as Honduras and Peru. During the final years of the 1980s until the beginning of the XXI century, the Colombia armed conflict between armed forces, the *guerrillas* and paramilitary groups scaled, and their consequences still remain on the millions of people that had to leave their land -due to that conflict, in 1995 Colombia was the first country to adopt a policy on internal displacement-. Later on, the violence that came from gangs and drug cartels has prevailed in other States such as Mexico, where guerrilla groups, criminal and paramilitary conglomerates occupied an important place as expelling agents towards the local population (Sánchez-Mojica 2020).

Throughout the region some regularities about Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) can be traced, among them, it’s a fact that internal displacement has uniquely affected, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, indigenous people and members of ethnic minorities. For example, the Colombian population that has suffered the most from the violence have been the black communities of the Pacific and in Guatemala’s and Peru’s process of internal displacement, the ones most affected were *campesinos[[6]](#footnote-6)* and indiginous people (Cohen & Sanchez-Garzoli 2001). Besides those groups, it’s valid to mention that the age, gender and disability factors are also very important and decisive as to how internal displacement affect each and every person in a different way, and they must be analyzed through an intersectional point of view since there could be a lot of overlapping vulnerabilities within the same group of people.

Nevertheless, in recent years, the displacements in the context of sudden and slow-onset disasters triggered by natural hazards, including the adverse effects of climate change have been added to the global and regional agenda with increasing relevance and even technical-economic projects that have resulted in the displacement of communities are having to be addressed due to the current environmental emergency (Lienhard 2013). In fact, the estimated total sum of IDPs in the latinamerican region was of 5.8 million last year, 2021, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC 2022).

Moreover, between 2008 and 2020, more than 26.2 million internally displaced persons were reported in the context of more than 1,600 disasters related to slow-onset and sudden-onset risks and climate change in the region (IDMC 2021). The most frequent were related to storms (10.4 million); floods (9.3 million) and earthquakes (6 million). Historically, storms, cyclones and hurricanes have affected Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean to a greater extent; storms and floods have done so in the Amazon region; and droughts impacted more frequently the desert Andean zone shared by Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Chile (Kaenzig & Piguet 2014; Abeldaño Zuñiga & Fanta Garrido 2020).

It’s safe to say that the increase in the intensity and frequency of environmental disasters is one of the immediate and visible effects of climate change. In 2020 alone, more than 4.8 million people were reported displaced due to these causes (IDMC 2021). Kumari Rigaud *et al* (2018) point out that by 2050 the population affected by climate change and forced to leave their homes in Latin America and the Caribbean could reach a total of 17 million people. This type of displacement has been characterized in recent years by occurring between short distances, towards urban centers (Cantor 2016; Kaenzing and Piguet 2014), and with a short average time (Yamamoto et al 2017). Most of them do not exceed a few months, mainly in cases of sudden disasters, however, they can imply severe effects in economic, social and health standards (Francis 2021). In addition to those, their effects are foreseen in the infrastructure and housing of the communities, this being the most common cause of internal displacement (Kolmannskog y Trebbi 2010).

Nevertheless, when it comes to the international agenda that has been mentioned, it’s valid to pinpoint that the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were approved in 1998, legally defining displaced persons as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border”[[7]](#footnote-7). These principles are easily applicable to displacement caused by sudden-onset disasters, although they are more difficult to apply to displacement occurring in the context of climate change. Later, in 2010, at the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Cancun, the outcome document recognized the link between climate change and displacement for the first time.

Additionally, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 incorporated recommendations for the treatment of displaced persons in the context of environmental disasters in 2015. Also, the Task Force on Displacement was established with the objective of developing recommendations to avoid, minimize and address displacement occurring in the context of climate change in the framework of COP 21 in the same year. Preceded by the Nansen Initiative, the Platform on Disaster Displacement was launched in 2016, as an initiative of a group of States, towards the purpose to protect transboundary migrants due to natural disasters and climate change.

Finally, in 2019, the UN established the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement to identify concrete recommendations on prevention and solutions to the internal displacement crisis, presenting its first report in September 2021 and including disaster displacement in its work plan. Meanwhile, at a regional level, the debate on internal displacement and natural disasters began to be recognized only in 2004, based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998). Since that year, the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly (GA) began to develop resolutions on the issue of internal displacement and natural disasters, yet the most recent of which was approved in 2014. The resolutions prior to that date were related to the Protection and Situation of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Americas.

In the region, there has been progress in relation to the inclusion of internally displaced persons since 2004. In relation to IDPs and natural disasters, the latest OAS General Assembly Resolution AG/RES. 2850 (XLIV-O/14) regarding IDPs is explicitly included:

To urge the member states to respond promptly and effectively to the needs of internally displaced persons in the event of natural disasters, including needs related to risk prevention, reduction, and mitigation, through domestic efforts, international cooperation, and, to the extent possible, dialogue with the internally displaced persons and the communities affected by internal displacement.[[8]](#footnote-8) (2004, 189)

In addition, this normative framework urges Member States to seek durable solutions, and to include the special needs of internally displaced persons include the special needs of internally displaced persons, such as physical protection, risk reduction, and economic means, in plans, policies, and programs. It also calls on affected and receiving communities. In addition, prevention and addressing the consequences of internal displacement, including natural disaster risk reduction.

### **1.1 The Inter-American Court of Human Rights and its stance on internal displacement**

Not only the OAS General Assembly, but also the Inter-American Human Rights Court must be mentioned when it comes to the internal displacement regional agenda, since its sentences and interpretation of HR international treaties are considered a guideline as to how the member State’s themselves must apply them in their justice systems. That is, all national judges of the States that have ratified the American Convention of Human Rights must apply the instrument following the Court’s interpretations about it due to the conventionality control mechanism and since the collegiate has had to address the issue of forced population displacement on countless occasions, those statements constitute agendas likewise GA’s resolutions.

Hence the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (hereinafter, the Court) has had to address the issue of forced population displacement on countless occasions. The origins of the factors that trigger displacement in the region are varied and mostly occur in contexts of armed conflicts, crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity. In that sense, some specific cases bring us important statements and interamerican interpretations about the issue: *Mapiripán Massacre* Vs. Colombia (2005); Chitay Nech, *et al* Vs. Guatemala (2010); Massacres of El Mozote and nearby places Vs. El Salvador (2012) and Pacheco Tineo family Vs. Plurinational State of Bolivia (2013).

Therefore, it’s important to have a grasp of each one. Firstly, the Mapiripán Massacre Vs. Colombia (2005) is presented. In this case, one of the issues addressed by the Court was the internal displacement that resulted from the massacre by paramilitaries surrounding Maripán in 1997, as matter of fact:

The Court considered it proven that the residents of Mapiripán were subjected to terror between 15 and 20 July 1997. Several of them witnessed how the paramilitaries took their relatives away from them. (p. 142) After the events of July 1997, the majority of the population of Mapiripán was displaced from the village. (2005, 143).

Likewise, the case of the Massacres of El Mozote and nearby places Vs. El Salvador, as the name states, is also about a massacre, but this one took place in December of 1981 during an state’s armed forces operation against members of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front and led to the forcible displacement of hundreds of civilians that resided in a rural area of El Salvador (Human Rights Watch 1992). As a result, the Court declared that the State was responsible for violating the human right to freedom of movement and residence, stated in Art. 22[[9]](#footnote-9) of the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR 1969), among others. Summarizing:

The Court considers that, in this case, the international responsibility of the State is aggravated owing to the context in which the facts of the massacres of El Mozote and nearby places were perpetrated, which relates to a period of extreme violence during the Salvadoran internal armed conflict that responded to a State policy characterized by military counterinsurgency operations, such as “scorched-earth” operations, intended to achieve the massive and indiscriminate destruction of the villages that were suspected of being linked to the guerrillas. The foregoing, by implementing the concept of “taking the water away from the fish” (supra para. 68). Thus, as has been proved, once the extrajudicial executions had been concluded, the soldiers proceeded to set fire to the people’s homes, belongings and crops and to kill their animals, which signified the permanent loss of the victims’ possessions and the destruction of their homes and means of subsistence, causing the enforced displacement from those places of the survivors. As has been established, entire family units were destroyed, and due to the very nature of the massacres, this altered the dynamics of the surviving next of kin and profoundly affected the community’s social tissue. Based on the preservation of the historical memory and the urgent need to prevent similar events from happening again, the Court emphasizes that the massacres of El Mozote and nearby places undoubtedly constitute an exponential example of this State policy, given the scale of the operation and the number of executed victims recorded. 291 In addition, as will be analyzed below, since that time and to date, there have been no effective judicial mechanisms to investigate the grave human rights violations perpetrated, or to prosecute and, as appropriate, punish those responsible. All this results in the aggravated international responsibility of the respondent State (Inter-American Court of Human Rights 2012, par. 208).

Nevertheless, the right to freedom of movement and residence itself still had to have its scope stabilized by the Court, which did so in the case of Chitay Nech, *et al* vs. Guatemala (2010), that refers to the State’s responsibility for the forced disappearance of the indigenous political leader Florencio Chitay Nech, who then was acting mayor of San Martín Jilotepeque (Chimaltenango, Guatemala). There, the tribunal has adopted an interpretation of Article 22 of the American Convention taking into consideration the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

In this regard, the Tribunal has considered that the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements of the United Nations are particularly relevant in order to define the content and scope of Article 22 of the American Convention, which define those forcibly displaced ‘as the persons or groups of persons that have been seen as forced or obligated to escape or run from their homes or their place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of an armed conflict, of situations of generalized violence, of violations of their human rights […], and that have not crossed an internationally recognized State border’ (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2010, par. 114).

Alternatively, in the case of Pacheco Tineo family Vs. Plurinational State of Bolivia (2013), the Court addressed the right to asylum and refuge. In this regard, the collegiate relates this right with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Convention on Territorial Asylum (1954) and other regional human rights instruments. Thus, the Court referred that:

The crucial importance of both treaties stems from the fact that they are the first international instruments that specifically regulate the treatment that should be given to those who are forced to abandon their homes owing to a rupture with their country of origin. Even if the 1951 Convention does not explicitly establish the right to asylum as a right, it is considered to be implicitly incorporated into its text, which mentions the definition of refugee, the protection against the principle of non-refoulement, and a list of rights to which refugees have access. In other words, these treaties establish the basic principles on which the international protection of refugees is based, their legal status, and their rights and duties in the country that grants them asylum, as well as matters relating to the implementation of the respective instruments. With the protection provided by the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the institution of asylum assumed a specific form and mechanism at the global level: that of refugee status. Thus, “the institution of asylum, which derives directly from the right to seek and enjoy asylum set out in Article 14(1) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is among the most basic mechanisms for the international protection of refugees (Inter-American Court of Human Rights 2013, par. 139).

### **1.2 The Climate Crisis and Internal Displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean**

In the LAC context, local countries have developed a robust normative framework for facilitating cross-border environmental mobility, but measures to ensure the protection of rights for people moving within national borders, however, remain less advanced (Francis, 2021). In this point, it's important to mention that local normatives are related to international legal categories which develop at different levels, but this process does not necessarily occur in a coherent and coordinated way (Van Velsen 2008). Hence, the first objective of this article is to describe starting from four study cases - Honduras, Bahamas, Perú and Brazil - how these categories have been introduced at the state level in the LAC context. In other words, the first objective of this article is to reconstruct and analyse what were the main national laws and policies of these four countries when circumscribing internal displacement in the context of natural disasters and climate change, and what type of data have been collected for the development of responses.

In that sense, through the study of the four chosen countries and their specific cases, we will be able to see how the impact of natural disasters has been increasing in recent years, and how it affects each place differently. The Bahamas, Honduras, Peru and Brazil do not have similar geographical structures, but nevertheless face somewhat comparable challenges with the advance of climate change as their situations have been worsening in recent years, leading to the cases presented later on. Hence, these critical episodes have put on our agenda the need to discuss the issue as well as the demand to have prevention and response plans for those types of emergencies since they’ve been increasing over time.

In Honduras, generalized violence has been the main cause of internal displacement. The presence of groups linked to criminal activities, organized in *maras*, are the great drivers of this violence. However, since the last few years, the country has been exposed to an environment with intense activity and climate change has exacerbated the situation. In 2020, more than 4 million people were affected by the passage of Eta and Iota. The Bahamas, an archipelagic nation, is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change. In 2019, Hurricane Dorian, the strongest recorded hurricane to hit the northwestern Bahamas, caused catastrophic devastation.

On the other hand, internal displacement in Peru has been a particularly worrying phenomenon in the recent past, due to the internal armed conflicts that ravaged the country in the 1980s and 1990s. Massive internal displacement also has occurred in Peru as a result of natural disasters of geological or climatological nature. According to the IDMC, through 2008 and 2019, the country - with a total population of 31 million - has seen approximately 656,000 disaster displacements. In 2017, the landslides and floods caused by the *El Niño* phenomenon affected over 1.5 million people, caused 162 deaths and damaged hundreds of thousands of houses.

Likewise, Brazil has an extensive history of internal displacement triggered by climate that has exponentially worsened in recent years due to climate change and global warming, owing to an estimated total sum of 19,701 IDPs according to IDMC (2020) but with new displacements hitting 358,000. Also, the prospect of future displacements per year in the country is expected to hit 202,976 for disasters such as earthquakes and floods (IDMC, n.d.), moreover, the death toll from such cases has also been expanding.

This study does not claim to be comprehensive or comparative, but it does seek to show certain heterogeneous trends across LAC. For this reason, in the selection of cases, we considered the representation of diverse geographies, socio-economic contexts, affected populations, causes and ways in which states have historically dealt with internal displacement.

The description of the countries processes will show conflicting tendencies on the legal and policy framework that evidence that internal displacement triggered by climate change still hasn’t been developed as a main issue for Latin America and the Caribbean in spite of being a recurring process throughout the continents.

In a complementary way, the second objective of this article is to analyze, from the four study cases, the value of an intersectionality[[10]](#footnote-10) approach to properly deal with contexts of internal displacement due to natural disasters and climate change. Finally, the study cases will enable us to describe the way that structural inequalities are experienced and how they affect IDPs in divergent ways.

### **2. Honduras**

#### **2.1 Honduras: geographical explanation, characteristics and protection framework**

Honduras is a Central American country with coastlines on the Caribbean Sea to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south. It has faced different natural disasters with increasing frequency, such as storms, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, landslides, and others, over the years.

In fact, it is well known that the Central American region is exposed to an environment with intense activity, but climate change has exacerbated the situation, causing more violent storms and hurricanes. In 2020, more than 4 million people were affected by the passage of Eta and Iota in Honduras, according to estimates by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[[11]](#footnote-11)

Indeed, the hurricanes and tropical storms not only cause flooding, land displacement and crop failures, but also a considerable rise in sea and river levels, resulting in unfortunate loss of life, as well as other factors such as property damage, destruction of homes, factories and businesses, destroying the livelihoods of many people.

Nevertheless, when analysing the structural causes of internal migration in the region, as mentioned by Lynch (2019, 7), emphasis is usually placed on the study of factors such as insecurity, corruption, inequality, etc., but very little mention is made of climate change. What are the reasons for this? It may lie in the fact that historically the drivers of internal population displacement were centred on the violence in the region, such as armed conflict, and the presence of drug cartels and gangs. At this point, it is important to mention that:

“Widespread violence may have become so normalized that many of the hundreds of thousands of displaced people across the region do not immediately identify it as the primary cause of their displacement(...) Decades of violence and state corruption have eroded trust in the system, so there is little incentive to trust state officials when one needs to seek protection.”[[12]](#footnote-12)(Nelson-Pollard 2017, 16-17)

It is important to review some frameworks for rights protection and cooperation project initiatives at the regional and domestic level. For example, the Central American Integration System (SICA)[[13]](#footnote-13) gathers together a number of countries in the region, such as Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. In the framework of SICA, the issue of climate change and risk management is on the agenda, in this context and in relation to this particular issue, the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC)[[14]](#footnote-14) has been created, which manages climate disaster prevention and risk reduction projects in the region. Nevertheless, the development of work on internally displaced persons in the context of climate crises is not as extensive as that on refugees and climate migrants.

Actually, Honduras has a Permanent Contingency Commission[[15]](#footnote-15) under the Secretariat of State in the Offices of Risk Management and National Contingencies, with the important purpose of coordination and elaboration of prevention projects and development of emergency plans[[16]](#footnote-16). Within the legal framework, it is important to mention the Law on National Contingencies (1993). In its first article,[[17]](#footnote-17) the law stipulates that it will regulate contingency situations in the territory caused by the alteration of natural phenomena and which are qualified as emergencies and disasters.

#### **2.2 Specific situation: Huracanes Eta and Iota**

In particular, in this report we have selected the cases of the huracanes Eta and Iota not only because of their devastating consequences, but also because they took place in the context of a pandemic, which aggravated the situation of the already battered population. First, it is necessary to provide a context for the situation. In November 2020, the hurricane Eta (category 4) -which later became a tropical storm-hit the east coasts of Central America, affecting several countries in the region, and causing strong tropical storms in Honduras, resulting in landslides and flooding of rivers. In addition to this, a few days later, another category 4 hurricane, known as Iota, hit Honduras, causing further damage on top of the one already inflicted by Eta.

Additionally, many testimonies[[18]](#footnote-18) indicate that the storms are getting stronger due to climate change. “*Nunca había visto una tormenta así*"[[19]](#footnote-19) say a victim, which means "I've never seen a storm like this before". These hurricanes, which later became tropical storms, significantly affected Honduras, especially because they occurred amid a year marked by the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic. According to a report (ECLAC, 2021) by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (hereafter ECLAC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB),it’s estimated tha*t:*

As of November 25 that 3,907,229 peopl**e** were affected by Eta and Iota. This concept is closer to the concept of secondary affected population used by ECLAC, since it also includes people who suffer other effects of disasters such as, for example, interruptions or deficiencies in the provision of public services, in commerce, or at work, as well as isolation, and people affected in their mental health[[20]](#footnote-20) (CEPAL, 2021:22)

Overall, the hurricanes have hit a population affected by significant internal displacement due to other factors, not just climate, and one of them is violence. In relation to this point, a report by the Inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence in 2019 [[21]](#footnote-21), prior to the passage of Eta and Iota, reveals that:

77% of displaced households (*2004-2018*) had been victims of specific acts of violence, while one fifth of households were displaced as a self-protection measure, out of fear in the face of a situation of generalized violence. In 45 per cent of cases, the specific acts of violence were also combined with fear of elevated levels of violence in the community (2019, 38)[[22]](#footnote-22)

#### **2.3 Main characteristics of displacement**

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center report (2021), the torrential rains and strong winds caused by the passage of Eta and Iota combined in one year the number of displaced persons of the previous 12 (IDMC, 31). To this must be added the structural poverty and the COVID-19 context, in which several people who have not been able to return home have joined the so-called *caravanas de migrantes*, a Spanish term that could be directly translated as migrant caravans. Another point to consider is that the destruction of crops increases the food insecurity already prevailing in the region (IFRC 2021, 9).

This situation of structural violence and the climate crisis hits women, children, and elderly people very hard in their lives and social environment**,** many of the women, girls and adolescents who have not been able to return to their homes after the passage of both storms went to shelters, where cases of sexual abuse were reported[[23]](#footnote-23), especially at the time of personal hygiene, this adds to the long list of violations of rights suffered by internally displaced women in times of natural disasters. To figure out population distribution, the ECLAC report addresses the impact of both hurricanes, and bases its research on Population Projections 2020 (ECLAC). This research shows that 51.3% of the Honduran population is female and 45% of the general population lives in rural areas. Concerning the Indigenous population, the same report refers to the 2013 census: “*In the last census of Honduras, 717, 618 people named themselves and said they belonged to a native people, only 23% lived in urban areas of Honduras”[[24]](#footnote-24)* (ECLAC 2021, 40)*.* Access to health, sex education and schooling is another factor to consider when analyzing the history of many IDPs, in context:

Honduras had in 2019 one of the highest adolescent birth rates in the region, 89 per 1,000 girls; another cause was the generalized violence caused by the gang phenomenon; and lastly, dropout was explained by high levels of poverty, with many young people and children leaving school because of poverty. Finally, the important levels of poverty were to blame for the high dropout rate, with many young people and children dropping out of school due to a lack of resources, or because they had to leave school due to lack of resources, or because they had to work to help support their families.[[25]](#footnote-25) (ECLAC-BID, 74)

The struggle of social, indigenous and peasant organizations to demand real environmental protection, which is a pending issue in Honduras, although the government announced at the time a clean-up operation and aid for the victims, called "they are not alone"[[26]](#footnote-26). However, it is clear that such policies are not enough. In this regard, the activist Amnistía International, activist Bertha Zúñiga Cáceres[[27]](#footnote-27), said:

The climatic affectations that we have experienced in recent weeks in our country have to do with the mismanagement of the common goods in nature, which are seen as merchandise, where there is an excessive consumption of them for the profit of economic groups.[[28]](#footnote-28) [[29]](#footnote-29)

### **3. The Bahamas**

#### **3.1. The Bahamas: geographical explanation, characteristics and protection framework**

The Bahamas *takes up 97 percent of the Lucayan Archipelago’s land area and is home to 88 per cent of the archipelago’s population*[[30]](#footnote-30), situated in the Atlantic Ocean, near to the Caribbean Sea, which has more than 700 islands, cays, and islets. At 2021, the population of The Bahamas was of 377,000[[31]](#footnote-31)(est.). As an archipelagic nation of small, low-elevation islands, The Bahamas is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change (McGranahan *et al*. 2007).

At an economical level, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of The Bahamas it’s reliant on the most of the tourism activities and services industry. Moreover, there are other activities that also involve the country’s income such as financial services, retail and wholesale trade, fishing, light manufacturing and agriculture.[[32]](#footnote-32) Most of these activities are dependent on natural environment and are vulnerable to natural hazards [[33]](#footnote-33), that can damage (even if they are not highly/deadly destructive) the natural resources, the economy and the quality of life of the inhabitants of the islands.

The Bahamas is part of the Caribbean countries that face a hurricane season, every year from June to September.[[34]](#footnote-34) Those natural hazards are common in the region, and there is accumulated learning from previous storms, local knowledge, and a vast number of practices that have evolved along the years. However, before 2019, those types of hurricanes damaged mainly infrastructures and private property, but it was not common that they’d provoke large-scale displacements.[[35]](#footnote-35) Despite suffering from different types of natural disasters over the years, such as tropical storms and hurricanes, and its vulnerability to earthquakes and tsunamis, those have been increasing frequency and ferocity, becoming more dangerous.[[36]](#footnote-36) As a result, the Bahamas had to face the strongest natural hazard in 2019: Hurricane Dorian.

At a regional level, the Bahamas is a Member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which includes 20 countries in the region. Most of the countries are island States, with exception of Belize, Guyana and Suriname. Yet they are developing countries, small-sized, that face challenges of natural disasters. The pillars of integration of CARICOM are economic integration, foreign policy coordination, human and social development, and security. [[37]](#footnote-37)

In December 2017, 18 Caribbean countries, CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) met in the Bahamas for the Caribbean Migration Consultation. At that meeting, all the countries were committed to working together to improve refugee and migrants’ protection. The meeting focused on large-scale forced displacement and exchanged best practices concerning legislation, alternatives to immigration detention and integration of migrants in the communities of receiving countries. [[38]](#footnote-38)

In order to face the natural disasters that occur in this area and generate severe damages at a material level and mainly in people's lives, the Bahamas has implemented a legal framework for infrastructure repair in natural disasters, that is called: Disaster Management Regulations for the Electronic Communications Sector in The Bahamas (2020)[[39]](#footnote-39), through the Public Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA), who is responsible for the governance of this regulation.

This initiative was driven by the destruction caused by Hurricane Dorian in 2019, which took many months of infrastructure reconstruction, which impacted at an economic and social level. The regulation came into effect in the first half of 2021. The aim is to make the networks sufficiently resistant, speed up the restoration of services and to reduce the time without service in these events since telecommunications play a fundamental role in this type of situation.

Communication and information technologies[[40]](#footnote-40) play an important role before, during and after these events in order to access information. Before the event, they make it possible to detect alerts and provide directions to define the steps to be taken to keep the population safe. During the event, they are important for the population to be informed of what is happening. For example, if conditions worsen, they can communicate with official agencies and be informed of new directions or provisions to be taken into account to keep them safe. After the event, they are essential for any rescue that needs to be done and to organize help.

In addition, this regulation establishes the possible creation of a multi-stakeholder industry group to be called the Electronic Communications Sector Disaster Management Stakeholder Group (the "Disaster Management Stakeholder Group"), whose objective is to assist the URCA in determining the approaches to the regulation of the Critical Electronic Communications Infrastructure with the aim to reduce: the emergency mortality, the number of people affected due to disaster, the direct economic loss, the damage to critical infrastructure that can lead to a disruption of basic services, and increase the availability early warning systems, and the access to information.*[[41]](#footnote-41)*

For this reason, it is sought that telecommunications are strong and can be active during all stages, facilitate the processes and improve the conditions of the population. Therefore, it implies a good practice of prevention and response. On Climate Change & The Bahamas: Information Brief (2021), it is stated that the association between climate change and the last hurricanes every time more strongly is correct. This is seen in studies that linked those things, and that it is seen in the increased force and devastation generated by recent natural events.

In that report, it is explained that The Bahamas is vulnerable to climate change, and the risks are notorious. The frequency of hurricanes, the rise of the sea level, floods are some of the hazards. Also, the food and water insecurity, water insecurity, forced-displacement, human health, tourism, among others. Those are some of the consequences that face and that directly impact in the livelihood. The economic means are at risk due to the dependency on tourism and fishing. Adding to that, at a social level it is needed to address the physical injuries and mental health challenges that can appear after a traumatic event.

This shows how changing and challenging climate change has been and how it affects populations, and the damage caused by not being prepared for these types of situations that, although exceptional, are too damaging not to take action.

#### **3.2 Specific situation: Hurricane Dorian**

According to the Global Internal Displacement Database[[42]](#footnote-42), in the hazard category weather related, The Bahamas had had in the past IDP related to strong storms, from 2015 to 2018 (2015: 2842, 2016: 3500, 2017: 1565, 2018: 230) were in total 8137 IDPs, in 2020 was 250 IDPs. But in 2019 the amount of internal displaced persons reached the record with the highest number that had seen in it, even more that the accumulated number from the past 4 years with 9,840 persons displaced.

Hurricane Dorian was the strongest recorded hurricane to hit the northwestern Bahamas, causing catastrophic damage from 1-3 September 2019. This category 5 hurricane hit furiously and left devastation and destruction in its path. The main areas affected were the Abaco Islands and Grand Bahama.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The high level of damage and devastation caused by Tropical Storm Dorian (that started its path in the latest days of August 2019) that evolved into a hurricane category 5, and made landfall on the Bahamas the 1st of September hit wind speeds of 295 kilometers per hour. It was the strongest hurricane in the region, and most of the damage generated by it was in the Bahamas. The devastation and the impact in the country were caused by combined factors: the hurricane, its strong winds, and a high storm surge that caused a "wall of water" that went up to 7 meters. That had a destructive impact mainly in Abaco Island and Grand Bahama.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Some of the testimonies of survivors explain the magnitude of this event, how unusual it was, how the ferocity and the type of hazards are changing, this kind of event they had never experienced before in The Bahamas. For example, Bob Cornea told to BBC website[[45]](#footnote-45),

Water was up to my neck. It stayed like that for two or three hours... My son... he got us out and we got over to safety. "We've been through all kinds of hurricanes, all kinds of storms: never anything that bad. I mean, it was like we were standing in the middle of the ocean. That's what it looked like. Waves, the water just crashing in over us. Horrifying. Absolutely horrifying (BBC, 2019.)

As a result of this impactful event, a new project was born: I Survived Dorian Hurricane Dorian[[46]](#footnote-46). This includes testimonies of the impact that had in their lives, how horrifying it was, their experiences and looks to raise awareness of the challenges of climate change can have in an island state. As example, there is the voice of Milande, Abaco that said:

“We didn’t think we were going to survive because we left our house when we thought it was going to collapse and went to stay in our neighbour’s vehicle (a Jeep).” “I had both of my children in my arms and I can’t swim.” “I don’t think there was NOTHING that could prepare us for Dorian. We felt like we were in a tsunami. It was like a horror movie.” **“It took almost a year for my son to talk and speak again after Hurricane Dorian.”** “I would love to move back home (Abaco), but there’s a housing issue there right now. I guess the pandemic took precedent with building initiatives.” “If we have a catastrophe like this again, it would be every man on their own.” “My biggest fear up to this day is that if we have another catastrophe like this, our country is not ready!” (I survived Dorian 2021)

According to Collecting And Using Data On Internally Displaced Persons: An Assessment Of The Bahamas And Hurricane Dorian[[47]](#footnote-47) more than 70,000 people were affected and 30,000 were left homeless and/or jobless, 75% of the housing was affected, and depending to the sources the amount of deaths are between 70 [[48]](#footnote-48) to 200. Many of them stayed uninhabitable. The damaged it is estimated on US$3.4 billion[[49]](#footnote-49). Due to this, at least 9,840 people were displaced to less affected zones of the country.

Most of the infrastructure and private property was highly damaged in Abaco Island and Grand Bahama. In those areas, people did not have access to shelter, water, food, communication, or electricity. According to the OCHA Situation report,[[50]](#footnote-50) the main priority needs were water, sanitation, health and food.

#### **3.3 Main characteristics of displacement**

The main characteristic of this motion of internal displacement is that it was across Islands. This climate event had a direct impact on Abaco that was hit on his economic hub and in the Grand Bahama, the International airport was destroyed. The local government was displaced, which limited their availability to start the clean-up and rebuilding effort. Both national and local governments were unable to face the situation in the places that happened, which led to a combination of public and private transport for the evacuations, which were delayed to three days of waiting. Nearly 5,500 evacuees from New Providence, and 1,957 IDPs in collective shelters were recorded.[[51]](#footnote-51)

The first steps of internal displacement started from both places to Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas situated in the southernmost island: New Providence. At least 5,500 IDPs were seeking transport to go to New Providence. When IDPs arrived there, they mainly stayed in collective shelters, host families, and rental properties. As some of them were having more access to communication, they tried to find help in other networks such as families or friends, those who did not have this possibility stayed in the shelters.[[52]](#footnote-52)

However, not all the groups of people, structures, and communities are equally affected when a natural hazard as Hurricane Dorian appears:

Pre-existing social and cultural norms and expectations placed on women and girls, including their roles and responsibilities in the home and in the community; their decision-making power in relation to men and boys; their engagement in paid work; level of education and other issues, can lead to women and girls being disproportionately impacted by disasters. (CARE Rapid Gender Analysis Latin America and the Caribbean – The Bahamas / Hurricane Dorian September, 2019) [[53]](#footnote-53)

Although this situation has generated great damage at a general level for IDPs, involving mobilization in search of shelter, transportation, security, water and food, it is essential to explain that it has had a different impact on different population groups. This has made visible the conditions of inequality they face, in terms of economic difficulties, whether or not they have family or social networks, access to information and communication technologies, among others. One of the main differences in the impact is between those who had local networks and economic means, because they returned to their place of origin or integrated into networks more quickly, and they did not need public assistance (2020).[[54]](#footnote-54)

There are some particular groups such as Haitians and LGBTQIA+ community that needed other solutions and for whom the recovery was more difficult. The report state that for the LGBTQIA+ community, the displacement caused by the event implied help from NGOs, as this situation increased the vulnerability in which they found themselves because they did not want to stay in the shelters because of threats of violence.

The report analyzes this aspect, showing the dynamics of the Haitian population in the Bahamas-. The Haitian migration began in 1950 and has historically been incorporated in a subordinated position in the Bahamas, but Hurricane Dorian increased the pre-existing inequalities.

Migration from Haiti to the Bahamas began in 1950 due to the political situation in their country of origin and the attractiveness of the Bahamas for work due to tourism, but the working conditions had the characteristics of low skilled, low paid and temporary work. Since that time, they have been excluded from many places by local citizenship and inheritance laws, which are not oriented to place of birth, as well as discrimination in some respects. This means that many people of Haitian origin residing on the island who may have been born there are not recognized under the law as Bahamians.

In 2020 the Haitian population in the Bahamas was 80,000 people. Many of them resided in informal settlements in New Providence and in Marsh Harbour district, which belongs to Abaco. Those settlements were destroyed by the storm and uninhabitable as homes, resulting in massive displacement. During the Hurricane, displaced Haitians spent more time in shelters or even in hiding due to fears of deportation. With no local networks, limited contacts, and nowhere to return to, the displaced Haitians stayed in the shelters. Many of them went into hiding because of document controls, coupled with threats of deportation. According to what the report mentions, in October 2019, 112 Haitians were deported.

**4. Republic of Peru**

#### **4.1 Peru: geographical explanation, characteristics and protection framework**

Peru is located in the western part of South America. It has a total area of 1,285,000 km2, making it one of the 20 largest countries in the world. Peru's economy is distributed between agricultural and export activities. The distribution between the two activities is quite uneven l: 30% of the population works in agriculture, but this activity accounts for only 8% of Peru’s GDP.

Internal displacement in Peru has been a particularly worrying phenomenon in the recent past, due to the internal armed conflicts that ravaged the country in the 1980s and 1990s. That tragic episode in history resulted in the deaths of around 70,000 people and the forced displacement of 600,000 people according to the *Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) (CVR 2003). This conjuncture constituted a painful process of uprooting and impoverishment, led to the concentration of the population in urban centers, and caused a delay in the possibilities of sustainable development that had a long-lasting impact. People displaced-indigenous peasant populations represented a disproportionate 70 per cent of them were forced to restable in very different contexts and suffer discrimination and economic issues. Those who returned had problems related to distribution of land and absence of governmental policies (OIM 2015, 58-64). Most of the IDPs that did not return after the conflict are currently in the urban centers, particularly Ayacucho, Lima, Junín, Ica, and Huánuco. This population was estimated at 150,000 by the Ministry of Women and Social Development in May 2007.

For many years, displacement studies were exclusively related to this tragic episode of Peru's history, but there are other reasons that we must pay attention to if we want to describe the phenomenon in its entirety. Massive internal displacement also has occurred in Peru as a result of natural disasters of a geological or climatological nature, and currently this is the main and most alarming reason.[[55]](#footnote-55) According to the IDMC, 2008 and 2019, the country with a population of 31 million has seen approximately 656,000 disaster displacements. Most of these were caused by climatic phenomena, especially floods, and the years 2012 and 2017 in particular were of soaring incidence. The latter is due to the fact that natural disasters are especially linked to the phenomena known as "*El Niño*" and "*La Niña*", which have, among their particularities, alternating cycles of extreme drought and unusual rainfall.

Across Peru’s arid coast, glaciated highlands, and tropical rainforest, people are exposed and vulnerable to many sudden- and slow-onset hazards, which threaten livelihoods and drive displacement (Blocher et al. 2021). Currently, half of the national territory is exposed to recurrent hazards, and a third of the population lives in exposed areas. Due to its geographical characteristics, analyzing the impact of climate change in Peru requires a differentiated study of the three main sectors that make up the vast Peruvian territory.

#### **4.2 Main characteristics of displacement**

The coastal region[[56]](#footnote-56) is threatened by rising sea levels, along with more intense *El Niño* events. The economic activities of local people are highly dependent on natural resources, and their livelihoods are directly affected by climate change[[57]](#footnote-57). The variable availability of resources depending on climate has historically led to seasonal migration, especially of men, in order to diversify economic activities. This has had negative effects on family and community structures, and has generally led to the expansion of informal housing in hazard-prone areas. Women and children are affected differently due to their greater vulnerability. There are communities made up almost entirely of single-parent households headed by women[[58]](#footnote-58), living in extreme poverty and currently lacking basic infrastructure, access to education and health, and little state support. In these particularly affected settlements, the absence of the state is replaced by strong social and community networks amongst women as a survival strategy. The impacts caused by natural disasters are devastating in terms of infrastructure, housing and livelihoods. For instance, the 2017 event left more than 1.5 million people affected in the area. This event has caused the most disaster displacement in the last decade and, to date, many affected people have still not been able to recover from the effects of it.

In the *Sierra* region, Andean communities are particularly affected by rising temperatures and the issue of water availability, which causes recurrent droughts. This has a serious impact on livelihoods, as the main economic activities are agriculture and livestock farming. In many areas of the highlands, the socio-economic situation of the inhabitants increases their vulnerability to the effects of climate and its impact on resources. The lack of opportunities, inclement weather and natural hazards to which they are exposed are one of the main causes of human mobility[[59]](#footnote-59) in this area. In particular, it is often young people in families who move when their communities are affected by climatic changes. Among the negative effects of this movement are the loss of labour in agriculture, as well as the loss of traditional practices and knowledge, revealing negative population growth rates in many places.

Finally, communities in the Amazon are exposed to multiple recurrent hazards, such as annual floods, landslides, droughts and extreme temperatures[[60]](#footnote-60). People often have strategies to adapt to these situations, including seasonal mobility. Intense flooding has resulted in displacement and temporary relocation. In past experiences, displacement has endangered human security as people are generally evacuated to shelters, or settle on vacant land where temporary housing doesn’t provide basic services, and they are unable to carry out their economic activities. As a result, in most cases, they end up returning to their homes even when the risk of flooding persists. Relocations had ambiguous results: there are some successful experiences, but in many cases, the processes are carried out without adequate community participation, and results in precarious and disorderly living conditions, especially because relocations do not take into account the livelihoods of the targeted communities.

As seen, its complex geography and extreme climates have led the inhabitants to develop adaptation strategies to cope with this context, but it is necessary to address these phenomena in order to anticipate and minimize possible negative impacts. When adaptive capacity is exceeded, displacement occurs, and there is a risk of large-scale displacement if the necessary precautions are not taken. This is of great concern because it would imply a serious setback in human development indicators that Peru has managed to improve in recent years.

At this point, it is complex to determine when human movement constitutes forced displacement or if it's a voluntary migratory movement, which is why the numbers are not so clear. Nonetheless, according to the IDCM, displacement due to armed conflict has been surpassed by displacement due to natural disasters. There is a Register of Internally Displaced Persons in Peru that was funded in 2005 under the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, but to date there is not a single person registered in it as a result of natural disasters, which in practice means that these people are invisible to the system created to guarantee their rights.

As it was told, Internal displacement was for a long time a major problem in Peru due to the armed conflicts in the 1980s. However, the first regulations appeared in 2004 with the 'Law N. 28223 on Internal Displacement'. Although the law makes no special mention of displacement due to natural disasters, its Regulations (2005) specifically include this circumstance. Among its most important definitions, it recognises displaced persons as having the same rights as other inhabitants, and establishes a series of reinforced obligations on the part of the state to guarantee them.

Previously, in 2011 the Law N. 29664 created the National Disaster Risk Management System (SINAGERD) in order to provide an institutional structure for this topic. One year later, in 2012, the Law on Population Resettlement for non-mitigable high-risk areas was approved. This normative instrument aims to organize the relocation of populations residing in areas where there is a possibility that they or their livelihoods are at risk. It establishes a procedure initiated by municipal governments, with the intervention of technical agencies and the participation of affected communities. However, various authorities and practitioners highlight that there are still important gaps between policies preserved in law and grounded practices (UN 2014).

Finally, Peru has been the first country in the region to adopt domestic legislation on climate change: In April 2018, the Framework Law on Climate Change was approved, which includes the principles and international commitments assumed in the Paris Agreement, and establishes an institutional method for the design and implementation of policies aimed at meeting these objectives.

These normative instruments, combined with regulatory provisions on sustainable development, risk reduction, environmental impact mitigation and other issues, make Peru one of the countries with the most advanced legislation on climate change displacement, although at present this legal framework isn’t sufficiently coordinated within one another, and its implementation and financing represents a permanent challenge for the Government. (Bergman *et al.,* 2021; IDCM 2017).

#### **4.3 Specific situation: *El Niño***

*El Niño*, a climatic event related to the persistent presence of abnormally warm waters during various months in the Pacific Ocean region, was an exceptionally large phenomenon that hitted in 2017 the North Coast of Perú. In particular, during three month El Niño affected the departments of Piura, Lambayeque and La Libertad. Its damage was such that even years later the region had not completely recovered. In sum, landslides and floods affected over 1.5 million people, caused 162 deaths and damaged hundreds of thousands of homes. Due to the floods, only in Piura´s capital were 20.000 of displaced persons (Cabrera Rivera 2018).

The previous appearances of *El Niño* took place in 1982 and 1997. In spite of being more aggressive, both events had less dramatic effects. The 2017 floods were largely a human-caused disaster and that infrastructural damages were greater in some sectors during the 2017 event not because of greater flooding, but because of rapid urbanization in recent years (Venkateswaran *et al.* 2017).

The disaster acted as a revealing event in terms of exposing a series of vulnerabilities among the rural communities of the region. In Piura La Libertad departments there is 25% of extreme poverty (WFP 2017), and women make up the majority of this population. At least 30% of them do not have a personal income. Hence, the disaster did not operate in a vacuum. Rather, *El Niño* acted on the extreme social inequalities that mainly affected rural women, as low access to education, healthcare, control over the household’s resources, among other disadvantages (Flores Fernández, 2019)

Consequences of *El Niño* were visible at different levels. One year after the event, 11.000 people still lived in temporary shelters without access to basic services, such as the lack of communal areas and spaces with a clear functional division or any precautionary measures to mitigate risks of gender violence. Nearly 3,000 were women, whose particular needs were often left unattended.

One of the most sensible impacts of the event is related to the lack of a gender approach of the affected population. In Piura, an estimated 100,000 women aged 15-49 and 134,000 children aged 17 and under have been left in highly vulnerable situations due to the floods (OCHA 2017). Several family men that lost their livelihoods were displaced to big urban centers to find economic resources. Women became female-headed households, and the burdens of post-flood health challenges and loss of housing have landed on the women’s shoulders (Flores Fernández 2019).

**5. Brazil**

#### **5.1 Brazil: geographical explanation, characteristics and protection framework**

The Federative Republic of Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and also the fifth most-populous one, accounting for roughly one-third of all Latin America’s population. For this reason, human mobility within and outside of the country greatly affects the region’s overall numbers. Nevertheless, the majority of Brazil’s population is concentrated along the eastern seaboard, being the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (RJ) the most populous and populous ones. Likewise, Brazil has been somewhat at the center of the world's economy for many years as it has a variety of wealth sources such as mines, huge hydroelectric and industrial complexes, fertile farmlands and oil reserves (Burns; *et al*. 2022).

Yet, acute social inequality remains a protagonist in Brazil’s reality since around 40% of the poorest inhabitants only perceive about less than one-tenth of the total country's wealth. Also in the center of Brazilian society are periodic financial crises, political deadlocks and environmental deterioration. As for the last one, it is important to have a quick grasp of how’s climate in the country, since we’ll be further studying internal displacement triggered precisely by climate change and or natural disasters. Therefore:

Brazil has a humid tropical and subtropical climate except for a drier area in the Northeast, sometimes called the drought quadrilateral or drought polygon, that extends from northern Bahia to the coast between Natal and São Luís; that zone receives about 375–750 mm of precipitation a year. Much of Brazil receives 1,000–1,800 mm annually, but precipitation often is much heavier in parts of the Amazon basin and the sea-facing rim of the Serra do Mar. [...] The central parts of the Brazilian Highlands receive most of their precipitation during the summer months (November to April), often in the form of torrential downpours. Storms and floods may strike the Northeast at that time, depending on weather patterns, but the region may also experience prolonged drought. These shifting conditions make life difficult in the sertão, the backlands of the Northeast, and are a major cause for migration out of the region (Burns; *et al*. 2022).

But, very little is known about Brazil’s dynamics and scales when it comes to internal displacement in spite of being the biggest country in the region, and having huge environmental-economic interventions as well as many natural disasters linked to climate change that directly impact on human mobility. Even the term ‘IDPs’ isn’t official in the country, the concept is only expressed through the word *deslocados*, which translates as displaced, but it’s only applied to people forced to evade their homes over major catastrophes or by the impact of substantial development projects, especially hydro-electric dams (Muggah 2015, 224).

Despite of this acknowledgment issue, limited land ownership, low incomes - especially in the rural areas - and volatile climatic conditions have continued to drive migration within Brazil. The highest net population influx comes from the North and Central-West regions due primarily to the ‘new’ Federal District, transferred from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília in 1960. Also, both the South and the Southeast receive lots of immigrants, mostly to the states of São Paulo and Rio, the two also hold foreign immigration. Meanwhile, in the centermost point of the drought region, a lot of the inhabitants of the state of Piauí have migrated towards regions with better climates and more job opportunities (Burns; *et al*. 2022) mainly through the 50s - 70s due to the post-War peak of the nation’s industrialization process, but that’s a cyclic pattern for the Northeast region.

#### **5.2 Main characteristics of displacement**

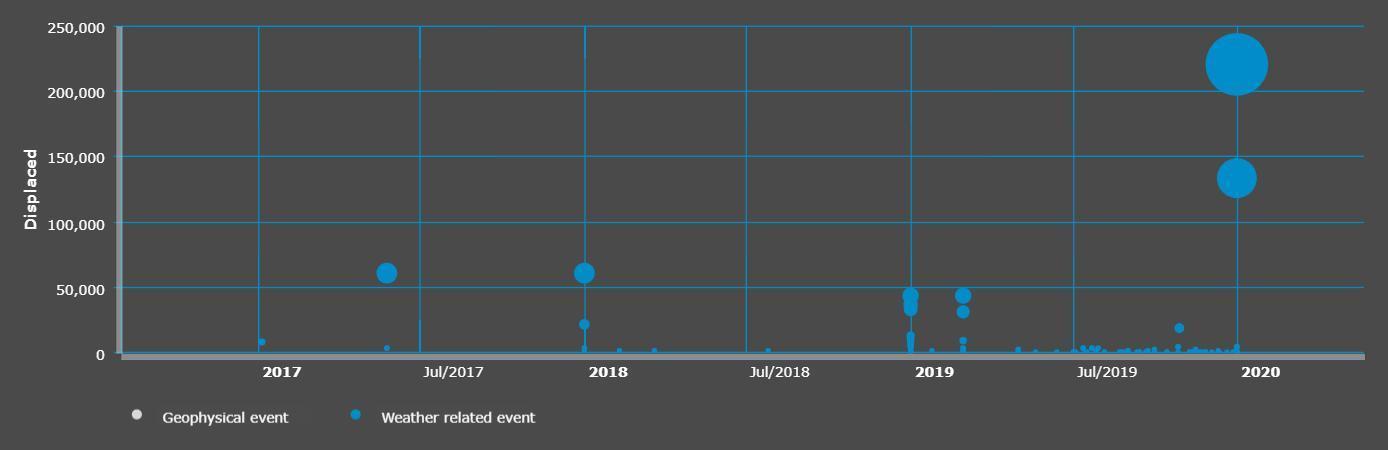
Predominantly, three scenarios that can lead to internal displacement can be generalized in Brazil: political and criminal violence, development and resource-related interventions and natural disasters. All three elements are treated as separate analysis categories, but they do interact, and this is especially true in urban settings such as São Paulo, Fortaleza, Rio de Janeiro, Recife or Maceió, since gangs, militia and police violence converge with urban modernization, renewal projects and even extreme climatic events such as rainfall and flooding due to their interventions in urban settings such as the construction of housing in environmental protected or dangerous areas. In fact, a combination of these factors is very common in some of Brazil's megacities, but also in large and medium urban areas throughout the country (Muggah 2015, 226). Besides:

Disaster-induced displacement in Brazil is fundamentally connected to pre-existing vulnerabilities of specific population groups, especially those residing in densely populated urban areas and others living in remote rural settlements. It is not just naturally-occurring events – floods, storms, land-slides – that precipitate displacement among poorer neighborhoods. Rather it is the precarious nature of buildings, their location on hilly or swampy terrain, the lack of land tenure allowing for more permanent construction, weaknesses in enforcing building codes and enforcing zoning, and the density of population clusters that turn routine crises into major catastrophes (Cunha 2012). [...] There are also major challenges in Brazil associated with longer-term degradation, not least in the interior and northern states. This has precipitated a persistent level of displacement to low-lying coastal areas and intermediate-sized cities, which in some cases simply ‘displaces’ the risks (Muggah 2015, 229).

When it comes categorically to forced displacement, between the years 2000 and 2017, most of those occurred in the Northeast (27%), and in the South and Southeast with 26% each. The North region of the country sums up a total of 19% and the Central-West adds a low 2% (Observatório de Migrações Forçadas, n.d.). However, according to Muggah (2015, 221) sparse literature can be found on voluntary and forced cross-border migration, but when it comes to IDPs even fewer is known. Nonetheless, the key authority when it comes to the issue, IDMC, started monitoring Brazil in 2017, which allows us to have more grasp over the real extent of the issue.

Results in, as of 31 December 2020, the total number of IDPs in Brazil according to the IDMC was 19,701 and the total sum of new displacements hit 358,000, in comparison, new displacements in 2016 were an estimated total of 14,000. Furthermore, the risk of future displacement per year in the country is expected to hit 202,976 for sudden-onset hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods, the latter being the main cause by far, with an estimated total of 201,712 (IDMC, n.d.). As shown in the graphic below, the amount of weather related events that led to internal displacement has grown a lot in the last couple years and that tendency is expected to carry on over the next decade, as a clear consequence of climate change. For reference, the blue dots shown in the graphic represent a disaster each, and all the bigger ones consist of floods.

Graphic 1 - Annual disaster events timeline



IDMC, n.d. https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/brazil

Notably, lots of climate shifts have been hitting the Americas, and in that sense the IDMC’s GRID 2021 about Internal displacement in a changing climate give us a good overview of what happened in Brazil as of 2020:

Weather-related hazards triggered most of the region’s disaster displacement in 2020, as in previous years. Climate variations linked to La Niña led to unusually heavy rains that triggered floods and landslides, and many countries reported increases in displacement. Some recorded their highest figures in years. An intense rainy season in Brazil, particularly from January to March, triggered more than three-quarters of the country’s 358,000 new disaster displacements. An unusual subtropical storm named Kurumí formed in the Atlantic Ocean east of São Paulo in January and brought torrential rain to south-eastern Brazil. More than 120 municipalities declared a state of emergency as floods prompted evacuations and destroyed homes. More than 112,000 displacements were recorded in the last week of the month. The state of Minas Gerais was the most affected as its capital, Belo Horizonte, recorded 171mm of rain in 24 hours, the highest figure in more than a century. Entire neighbourhoods were submerged and landslides engulfed homes. Flooding hit again in March, and Pará was the most affected state. More than 51,000 displacements were recorded as several rivers burst their banks. The municipality of Marabá declared a state of emergency after the waters of two major rivers rose 11 meters above their normal level, triggering 18,000 displacements. By the end of the year, the country as a whole had recorded its highest number of new displacements since 2010 and around 20,000 people were still displaced (IDMC, 2021, 62).

Meanwhile, standards on the protection of IDPs only tried to be built for those whose displacement had been caused by development projects, back in 2013, when Brazil’s Ministry of Cities approved policies intending to safeguard the rights of residents who are involuntarily removed from their homes. They were proposed based on constitutional provisions about housing and the human being dignity guarantees, stating that assessments should be undertaken before big development interventions in order to establish alternatives to the displacements caused by it as well as limiting the amount of displacements, ensuring the protection of environmental conservation areas and adequate housing alternatives, also requiring a draft resettlement plan for the affected families, including suitable compensation quotas (Muggah 2015, 232). Regardless of that initiative, IDPs remain invisible to the Brazilian Government even in times of extreme disasters.

#### **5.3 Specific situation: Record rainfall**

In late 2021, “the worst disaster that has ever occurred in the history of Bahia” (Costa 2021) took place, as declared by the state’s Governor. Weeks of heavy rain preceded by flooding and the collapse of floods left the Northeast state at a high emergency status, in its capital, Salvador, December 2021 rainfall was six times greater than average according to specialists (Aljazeera 2021). This amass of disasters led to countless displacements and deaths, the scale was so huge and frightening that even Argentina, a neighboring country, offered aid to Bahia.

Even so, Jair Bolsonaro, currently Brazil’s president, rejected it by simply saying the country didn't need any assistance to deal with the deadly floods, declaration that were easily contradicted by not only the facts themselves but also by Rui Costa, Bahia’s governor, who affirmed that local authorities would gladly welcome help from any nation since some of the state’s regions looked as if they were ‘bombarded’. Meanwhile, Bolsonaro, the impersonator of the highest Governmental power in the country, was enjoying his vacation in the Southern region, even though it was the pinnacle of a disastrous situation that was killing and disestablishing his own constituents (Reuters 2021). Yet, absurds like this are unfortunately common in brazilian reality since the beginning of the current mandate, in that sense:

Brazil, is currently under a far-right government that has often issued climate skeptic declarations, while other LAC states either have or may emerge as potential “champions” of the discussion. Especially the Dominican Republic—which has organized a debate on climate and security during its UN Security Council presidency—and any UN member states that have joined the Friends of the Climate and Security Mechanisms. Even in states with climate-denying governments, such as Brazil, subnational governments have worked individually or collectively on climate issues. For instance, governors from states in the Brazilian Amazon have formed a coalition to seek solutions for deforestation and other climate-related issues, bypassing the federal government (Abdenur; Igarapé Institute; Rüttinger; Adelphi 2020,17).

Overall, situations such as those expose the federal lack of interest in issues related to natural disasters, despite Brazil being integrally affected. However, this study will be focusing on a specific state in order to have a deeper grasp about the issue, considering that it wouldn’t be plausible to attempt covering the totality of a countinencios country. In that sense, Rio de Janeiro's situation will be further analyzed due to its characteristics when it comes to intersections of IDPs, the impact of climate change and its relevant currency. Rio’s also the most visited state in the country that arguably gets the majority of internacional atencion when it comes to Brazil since it’s known globally for its amazing natural views, such as Pão de Açúcar and the Copacabana beach, its local parties like Carnaval, and, of course, its soccer scene. The state’s also home to the largest *favela*[[61]](#footnote-61) in Latin America, Rocinha, and several others. In that sense:

Rio de Janeiro has Brazil’s second largest metropolitan population. Rapid urban growth has produced series of physical and social problems, while the demand for housing has raised urban land values to staggering heights. As a result, members of the middle class have been increasingly forced to live in minuscule apartments in densely packed high-rises, while the poor are confined in nearby favelas (“shantytowns”) or in residential areas that may be several hours away from their workplaces (Burns; *et al*, 2022).

Consequently, when there’s such a concentration of a large sum of people - an estimated 6.775.561 in the city of Rio and 17.463.349 in the state as of 2021 (IBGE, 2021) - events that trigger displacement tend to have considerable repercussions. In February and March of the present year, 2022, abnormal rains struck Rio’s imperial city: Petrópolis, leaving hundreds of people dead. The city’s civil defense reported that 534,4 mm of rain fell in just 24 hours, the biggest rate in history, and that 217.4mm of that sum fell between 14:00 and 18:00, that is, in only 4 hours it rained the equivalent of a whole month. More than two hundred landslides were reported within 24 hours in 19 different points of the city, warnings were issued due to the severe weather and local authorities provided around 23 emergency accommodation centers. As of March 21, the local Secretary of Social Assistance declared that it was working to ensure that the 839 people that went to those emergency points were taken care of, as well as maintaining support for other 289 people being observed due to the February rains (Agência Brasil 2022; Floodlist 2022).

Even between the search and clean-up efforts, repeated downpours restrained the work of emergency teams and volunteers, who had to dig through thick mud with shovels and other hand tools looking for their loved ones in unstable areas. The February rainfall also exceeded the average for the whole month in a single day, triggering landslides and floods (BBC News 2022). And the following month disaster triggered even more:

A memorial for 233 people killed during landslides and flash flooding in the Brazilian city of Petrópolis has been destroyed by heavy rain. At least five people died and four have been missing since Sunday evening. Residents shared videos on social media of the symbolic white crosses floating away as rain continued to devastate the city. The 233 crosses had been set up in the city centre on 15 March to mark one month since February's tragedy [...] Petrópolis resident Ana Maria Riet told BBC News that the February floods destroyed "many dreams along with the city and its inhabitants". The heavy rains on Sunday caused serious concerns among residents and brought a "heavy memory of the tragedy that occurred in our city just over one month ago", she said. Due to the heavy rain and fear of further landslides, 149 residents have been evacuated into emergency shelters set up by local authorities and a severe weather warning has been issued (Santos 2022)

Hence, the death toll from the torrential rains that triggered flash floods and landslides in the city wasn’t the only trauma its population had to go through. Internal Displacement in cases such as this one are very common in Rio, but most people tend to go back to their homes after staying at shelters and try to rebuild even when there’s imminent future risk, due to a huge lack of housing and income solutions. Logically, that happens specifically with the poorest portion of people - that is the majority - hence, internal displacement isn’t faced the same way between everyone because of many pre-existing vulnerabilities intersections that present themselves. The foremost one in Rio is precisely how different economic classes face the phenomena.

Historically, Rio has been a divided city between those who hold the money, the power and the family names and those who only offer their labor capacities. In fact, being the nation’s capital between 1822 to 1960, lots of urban resettlements were proposed and made by the likes of the Portuguese Royal family, that remained in power even after the nation’s independence, and the nobility. That is, the rich constantly set forced resettlements in motion and that is a pattern repeated up until nowadays with the concept of gentrification, moreover, the racial element also plays a huge part in it, since the ones firstly displaced where recently freed slaves. Thus, “forced resettlement of squatters and landless groups into planned housing schemes is itself often followed by migration to favelas and lower-income areas, since these same people are simply unable to meet the rising costs of living near urban centers” (Muggah 2015, 229).

On the other hand, when it comes to climate change or disaster triggered displacement, one may think that the economic class wouldn’t change how it affects people, since it’s something caused by nature. Still, as stated before, pre existing factors are key in the comprehension of internal displacement in Brazil. As a matter of fact, the areas that suffer the most with heavy rains are exactly the *favelas* due to its lack of construction analyses, especially in the hills, often places subjectible to landslides. Whilst most richer people take comfort in their modern buildings, watching floods come and go. That extreme reality shift can be seen in the same street when Rio’s the subject. A concept that illustrates really well the dynamics seen in the state is environmental racism:

Environmental racism refers to the institutional rules, regulations, policies or government and/or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for locally undesirable land uses and lax enforcement of zoning and environmental laws, resulting in communities being disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous waste based upon race. Environmental racism is caused by several factors, including intentional neglect, the alleged need for a receptacle for pollutants in urban areas, and a lack of institutional power and low land values of people of color. It is a well-documented fact that communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by polluting industries (and very specifically, hazardous waste facilities) and lax regulation of these industries (Green Action, n.d.)

The same logic is true when applied to internal displacement, because communities of color and or low-income are disproportionately impacted by it when it comes to the amount of persons displaced and also the way displacement affects them. For this reason, it would be expected that at least the local authorities would have Public Policies (PPs) aimed at that population, but that’s not a reality. Even for floods in general, which are the main cause of displacement in Rio and happen regularly, not much is being made. The city of Rio Operations Center (OC) is the one and only example of a good public initiative regarding it, it’s responsibility is to control daily operations made in the city, integrate different departments and handle crises and emergencies:

Rio de Janeiro has been hit hard by repeated Atlantic storms imperiling the city. This especially affects the mostly low income settlements that are located on the high slopes surrounding the metropolis and are prone to devastating landslides. Following a vicious storm in 2010, Rio de Janeiro decided to create a center that operates 24 hours a day, staffed by officials from 30 city departments. This center has become a global model showing the benefits that can be derived from collaboration, alignment and data sharing across city divisions. The model has had many other benefits for the day-to-day management of the city. Traffic emergency time response has been reduced significantly with citizens alerted about traffic snarl ups and accidents and redirected to the best routes. Data gathered for the center also enables the identification of neighborhoods with higher dengue fever infection rates. In planning the facility, Rio officials visited alert centers in Madrid, Seoul and New York, and have since forged cooperation with the city of Johannesburg that established a similar entity, the Joint Operations Committee (Urban Sustainability Exchange, n. d.)

Summarizing, the OC is very valuable when it comes to emergencies and dealing with the day-to-day of a metropolis. However, the city even developed partnerships abroad to share its knowledge but wasn’t capable of doing so for its own neighbors or higher authorities. For instance, if Petrópolis had a OC like Rio’s, the extent of deaths and displaced persons for sure would’ve been smaller compared to the colossal numbers that were perceived, because the city’s alerts didn’t work properly to anticipate its inhabitants of what was coming. Whereas, IDPs remain invisible in PPs not only in Rio but throughout the country, but they undoubtedly exist and deserve to be acknowledged in order to have their human rights guarded.

**6. Final considerations**

Overall, Latin America and the Caribbean have a wide variety of factors that influence the forced displacement of populations: civil wars, crimes against humanity, drug trafficking, structural poverty, marginalization, racism, amongst others. It is difficult to think about approaching Latin America and the Caribbean without thinking about the historical and political context, factors that generally aggravate any critical crisis that the population must face.

However, displacement for climatic reasons has yet to take the relevance that it deserves due to the current crisis related to it, which will worsen over the years. Although abundant regional and internal legislation related to climate issues has been found, as demonstrated above, the reality in practice is quite different. Especially because displacement triggered by climatic reasons has not been given a role in those legislations and this point has been echoed in the testimonies of the people in the focused analysis worked throughout the present paper.

Besides, the registration, monitoring and quantification of the issue is certainly a blind spot on the local national agendas, with the exception of a few cases (Yamamoto *et al.* 2017) and that’s a vitally important record since the ways in which States classify and identify their population have impacts on the effectiveness of public policies, as well as on how the persons conceive themselves (Trouillot 2001).

Furthermore, LAC is diverse in political contexts, social situations and even geographic particularities. Therefore, the treatment of internal displacement and climate change challenges has also been heterogeneous and opposed. In the same way, the pre-existing inequalities were enhanced. There is a common denominator though, there are groups that face more at risk than others, that is, not all IDPs have the same resources or need the same solutions. There is a different impact, which shows the lack of adequacy of policies that contemplate the particularities of different social groups in each scenario.

Real commitment and interdisciplinary policies carried out with consensus are needed, and listening to the affected communities directly is fundamental for politicians to understand that there is no more time, that the emergency is now and public policies need to be developed along with specific studies with urgency.

Moreover, as stated before, there’s a link between climate change and the increase of the ferocity of the last hurricanes, floods and landslides as well as the destruction and devastation they leave behind, instigating massive displacements and making it clear that’s necessary to address this issue with a strategy that includes all three phases of climate emergencies: prevention, the *modus operandi* of when it’s happening, and how to deal with it once it’s over.

These situations must involve mobilization for shelter, security, water, food and access to information aa they’re all fundamental in order to know what to do, what’s going on, where to go and the availability of resources. Not only that but particular groups also need specific solutions for their care and recovery, in the case of Honduras, for example, women and children, in the Bahamas, Haitian migrants and the LGBTQIA+ population, in Peru women from rural settings and in Brazil racialized and or low-income communities. To sum up, public policies in all four cases are insufficient, each in their own way, to grasp all the needs from all different groups of IDPs.

Truly, the issue doesn’t count with the amount of governmental attention it should in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on its extent and gravity in the region. In conclusion, the climate emergency is faster than the adaptation of legislation in LAC. Contingency plans are rarely sufficient to meet the assistance needs of people in countries with other structural problems such as poverty, corruption, gang, and state violence.

Protecting nature, listening to indigenous communities, experts and youth when legislating and preventing it is a possible solution, but it is tainted by the high levels of corruption in many countries in the region. In other words, to protect and assist Internally Displaced Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the *modus operandi* of politics itself and public management must change to one with a human rights based approach in its core.

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