ANNUAL REPORT 2016
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*Cover image: Paddy land in Taninthayri, Myanmar (Image: José Arraiza)*
This year’s Annual Report of Displacement Solutions commemorates ten productive years since our establishment in December 2006. Our work over the past decade, under the leadership of our Director Scott Leckie, has used creativity, dedication and innovation to push vital human rights issues into mainstream policy realms. As a result, DS expanded protections to some of the world’s most vulnerable people. We did this with a focus on families and communities threatened with permanent displacement because of the effects of climate change. For instance, DS’ globally pioneering work on land acquisition and planned relocation for climate displaced communities has led to major changes in national and international policies on these important issues throughout the world. At the same time, much remains to be done: The world now finds itself in an era of displacement with more than 65 million people displaced at present, more than at any other time since the end of World War II. This requires ever-new approaches to resolving and repairing displacement. It will be to this goal that DS will continue to dedicate itself in the years, and hopefully, decades to come.

– Matthias von Hein Chairperson, Displacement Solutions

It is hard to believe that DS has now been active for ten busy and eventful years. This has been quite a ride for our (intentionally) small and flexible organisation, and one involving a wonderful team of dedicated HLP experts from around the world working in a range of displacement hot spots. From developing the Peninsula Principles, to spearheading global efforts to obtain land for climate displaced people, developing IDP return designs in Timor Leste, Somalia, Colombia, Bhutan and many more, carrying on-site investigations in Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Panama, Kiribati, Bangladesh and other climate change-affected areas, to conducting HLP rights analysis and restitution design work in Myanmar, advising the UN on HLP issues in Syria, publishing several books, inaugurating the world’s first law school courses on climate displacement, and writing DS reports, producing films, building homes for climate displaced families in Chittagong, and so much more, this first DS decade has been an exhilarating one.

Since our founding on 28 December 2006, DS has worked in some 35 countries to assist in finding rights-based solutions to forced displacement in all of its forms. Besides our legal experts, we have had the honour of working with villagers, community leaders, grassroots groups and NGOs across the globe, all of us working together to find viable ways of preventing and repairing displacement. Our work was initially focused on voluntary repatriation, return and housing, land and property restitution for IDPs and refugees, but has since expanded to a primary, but not exclusive, focus on climate displacement. We remain one of too few international NGOs focusing on actively preventing and repairing climate displacement through approaches that are rights-based, led by the communities affected and carried out in a wholly bottom-up approach. One of our main added values is the assistance we provide to affected communities to strengthen their hands in negotiations with their own governments to achieve better and more sustainable solutions for the ever-growing number of people forced to leave their homes and lands because of climate change. We look forward to continuing to expand this work in the years to come.
On this tenth anniversary year of DS actions around the world, I would like to personally take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to all of our supporters for making this journey so productive and even sometimes victorious. Special thanks first to the DS Board of Directors for your commitment and for making it all possible, and of course, to our many donors without whom we wouldn’t have been able to operate – thank you! Thanks, too, to the amazing group of world leading HLP experts that we have been so fortunate to work with; your dedication to the cause of preventing and repairing displacement, your willingness to work in often difficult conditions and your care for displaced populations you strive to assist are all deeply appreciated.

DISPLACEMENT SOLUTIONS WAS THE FIRST GLOBAL NGO TO:

- Negotiate a land deal in support of climate displaced communities (Bougainville, PNG (2007)).
- Develop national HLP Initiatives to repair climate displacement (Bangladesh, 2011).
- Develop a new international normative standard on the HLP rights of climate displaced communities (The Peninsula Principles (2013)).
- Construct an interactive online global climate displacement map.
- Research and publish books, findings and recommendations on land solutions to climate displacement.
- Design and teach courses at world leading law schools on human rights and climate change and;
- in 2015 DS was awarded one of the prestigious UN Sasakawa Awards in recognition of our work to support climate displaced communities.

Image: (L-R) DS Partners Mohammed Shahjahan (YPSA, Bangladesh), Blas Lopez (Guna People’s Assembly, Panama), Scott Leckie (DS Director), Arif Rahman (YPSA, Bangladesh) and Zeke Simperingham (DS/now with IFRC)
And to displaced people everywhere – both those already displaced and the hundreds of millions that climate change will displace without the preventative action we have so vigorously sought – I can say simply that we have tried our best over the past decade with our strategically innovative approaches to resolving displacement to find ways that would either get you home to where you wanted to be, or to find new living options when return was either impossible or unwise. This work is hard and faces a never-ending series of obstacles along the way, but as long as DS is in place, we are committed to continuing our efforts to end forced displacement, strengthen the rights of the displaced and continue to advocate for a vision that ensures that all displaced people no matter where they reside and no matter what the cause of their displacement, achieve residential justice and the guarantee of their HLP rights without delay.

Even as the forces causing displacement - whether by human rights abusers or the climate itself - seem to grow rather than subside with each passing year, DS will continue to strive to find new pathways for enabling people to stay safely in their homes, exercise their restitution rights if they wish to return home and to find wholly new and creative ways of protecting the rights of climate displaced communities in how many year there are to come.

If I have learned one thing over the past thirty years of working towards residential justice throughout the world, it is the simple truth that for people everywhere their homes and lands to them are nothing short of sacred. Far too many governments, non-state actors and others either consciously neglect this basic truth and grab lands for their own personal enrichment or carry out economic and other activities within the prevailing global marketplace that guarantee that climate change will continue to displace
ever-larger numbers of people until it is finally stopped. People's homes and lands are at the centre of their daily struggle for human rights; whether island dwellers in Panama, IDPs in Myanmar, and refugees and IDPs everywhere who continue to be actively thwarted in their efforts to recover their homes and lands. It is through ensuring that everyone has a safe and secure place to live which cannot arbitrarily be taken from them that the broader quest for human rights can be attained. Without these basic prerequisites in place, the profound promise of human rights law can only ever fall short of expectations.

It is well within the power and means of every government, without exception, to respect, protect and fulfill housing, land and property rights, and to create conditions for their full enjoyment. This includes making sure that people threatened with climate displacement can turn to highly capable, fully resourced agencies entrusted with finding new land resources for them, that those displaced following conflicts long since dormant can return to and re-assert control over the homes and lands which the forces of ethnic cleansing attempted to take from them, and that those currently in the midst of displacement can be assured that when the time is right they too will be allowed the right to return home to the place they deem sacred and non-negotiable.

Though many holding the reigns of political and economic power today would like us to believe that housing and land are nothing more than commodities to be bought and sold to the highest bidder without regard to the history, wishes and rights of the people who call such places home, nothing could be farther from the truth. Yes, of course, people's homes do generally constitute a considerable asset for owners and a place to call home for the billions of non-owners throughout the world, but where we live is more than this. Indeed, in working to halt forced displacement and repair it when it has already occurred our ultimate aim is to build a community of nations and people across the world who have moulded the full spectrum of our laws and practices into a common code applicable universally which simply asserts that housing, land and property rights are sacred, not to abused with impunity, not to be taken away with the stroke of a pen or the bullets of a madman, but the cornerstone of our shared humanity, the basic building blocks of a sustainable global community of nations where everyone, everywhere is shown the respect for their rights that all deserve.

Scott Leckie
scott@displacementsolutions.org
DS Founder and Director
8 February 2016
Displacement Solutions was established in 2006 to fill an institutional gap in actively and innovatively resolving displacement crises throughout the world. While many organisations advocate on behalf of the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, we believe our HLP-focused approach remains relatively unique. Our aim is to help governments, intergovernmental bodies and displaced people themselves to prevent or repair displacement through a focus on strengthening housing, land and property rights, given that violations for these rights are so often the root cause of displacement. Displacement Solutions attempts in each case to provide fresh, creative and practical perspectives that can result in actually resolving – person-by-person and community-by-community – outstanding cases of displacement.

We work with people who have been displaced by conflict, forced eviction or other human rights abuses, natural disasters, climate change and other circumstances beyond their control. In 2017, our primary goal will be to empower people displaced by the effects of climate change to access new homes and lands when their current homes and lands are no longer viable. We will assist climate-affected communities in Bangladesh, Colombia, Fiji, Panama and Solomon Islands to identify land solutions and new land sites, consistent with the terms of human rights law and the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States. We will also work in Myanmar to garner greater attention to HLP restitution and to pursue the establishment of a Myanmar National Climate Land Bank.
Displacement Solution's current methodology has four key elements, one of which is essentially reactive in nature and which responds to requests for expertise and assistance on various HLP rights issues. The other three methods are more pro-active in nature, and focus on land acquisition for climate-affected communities, HLP issues in Myanmar and international advocacy.

The first aspect of our methodology concerns our **The Global HLP Rights Expert Registry** which enables the organisation to deploy at short notice more than 140 of the world’s leading HLP rights experts to displacement crises, particularly conflict, post-conflict, post-disaster and settings where climate change is already causing displacement, to help find viable and creative HLP solutions to displacement. Our HLP rights teams work on climate change challenges, peace and post-disaster operations to provide the expertise required to ensure that housing, land and property rights issues are properly addressed. The teams drawn from the Registry are carefully tailored to fit the particular displacement and HLP problems in the affected country. As we are able to compose these teams at very short notice, this considerably improves the response of national governments and the international community to these crises, and speeds up the process of identifying long-term solutions.

The **Climate Displacement Land Initiative (CDLI)**, the second main element of our work, has been formulated on the basis of the field work carried out by DS in some of the first communities in the world that are experiencing climate displacement. Based on the feasibility studies and consultations with local stakeholders, DS carries out wholly unique work in five focus countries - Bangladesh, Colombia, Fiji, Panama and Solomon Islands - designed to diagnose the likely scale and locations of climate displacement within these countries, identify land sites that would be suitable for planned relocation, and develop with our local partners national climate relocation plans designed to resolve climate displacement by securing new residential options for people that will enable them to stay within their own country.
The third area of our work is the Myanmar HLP Initiative which aims to shed light on the numerous HLP rights challenges facing the people of Myanmar today by building capacity for enforcing these rights. The Initiative works together with various groups within the country towards these ends, and explores key questions such as: What are the characteristics and status of the legal regime in Myanmar as it relates to HLP rights issues? The need to develop a new restitution law and commission to achieve residential justice for all. How effective is the current legal regime in protecting and promoting human rights standards relevant to HLP rights? How can the current legal code be used to address HLP rights in Myanmar? How might the current legal code be reformed to more effectively protect and promote HLP rights? How can the capacity of civil society be enhanced to more effectively address the HLP legal environment in Myanmar?

And finally, the fourth element of DS’ work is International Advocacy. In 2016, this work included hosting global events such as the Roundtable on Land Access and Climate Displacement which DS and partners hosted in April 2016, our international advocacy to promote the Peninsula Principles at the UN, growing efforts advising the UN on addressing HLP issues in Syria, expanding the ‘Where Will We Go’ Exhibition, teaching law school courses on Climate Change and Displacement, constantly updating and expanding the DS Website and engaging with the media, and producing films such as our next film entitled ‘The Land Seekers’.

**DS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Board of Directors meets regularly to review the progress of Displacement Solutions, carry out in-depth due diligence and to review upcoming plans of action. The DS Board is currently comprised of Matthias von Hein (Chairperson), Robert Zoells (Secretary) and Simon Studer (Treasurer).

**DONOR SUPPORT**

Work by DS towards these objectives was supported by a range of donors in 2016, including the Thierry Fauchier-Magnan, the Hoffmann Foundation, Norwegian Refugee Council, Overseas Development Institute, The Principality of Liechtenstein’s Office of Foreign Affairs, Rights Action, Sandoz Family Foundation, Stichting ForTuna and UN Habitat.
THE CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT LAND INITIATIVE (CDLI)

As our name suggests, Displacement Solutions works to find rights-based solutions to climate displacement. Over the past decade we have been working in the field in some of the countries hardest hit by climate change, from Bangladesh and Kiribati, to Panama and the Maldives and beyond. Our work centres around communities whose homes will soon or have already become uninhabitable due to the effects of climate change. We are one of very few international organizations that works on this issue through practical programmes in the field, as well as through efforts to improve national and international legal, policy, and institutional frameworks. We are also one of the only organizations that focuses on what we believe is at the very center of solving climate displacement – land. Much of our effort is directed towards finding alternative land and housing for communities already facing or threatened with losing their homes to the effects of climate change. We work with a wide range of partners, including communities affected by climate displacement, grassroots organisations, governments, UN and other international agencies, NGOs and academic institutions.

We believe that in protecting the housing, land and property (HLP) rights of climate displaced people everywhere we assist greatly in securing residential climate justice. We are convinced that the role of land is central in resolving climate displacement, and consequently that there is a pressing need to increase access to land in the development of viable domestic strategies, laws and policies designed to prevent and repair climate displacement. Land needs to be identified, acquired and allocated in all societies where internal planned relocation of climate-affected communities at a level commensurate with the scale of present and likely future climate displacement. Specifically, land set-aside programmes managed by yet to be created National Climate Land Banks can in principle be established in all countries to act as central repositories for land designated exclusively for the use of climate displaced persons and communities, based on clear national policies and effective institutional frameworks dedicated to preventing and repairing climate displacement.

- Excerpt from speech by DS Director Scott Leckie to the DS Roundtable on Land Solutions to Climate Displacement (25 April 2016, Geneva)

Humanity has never faced a greater challenge than climate change. While the most dramatic impacts of climate-change, such as the complete submersion of island states like the Maldives or the Marshall Islands, are many years in the future, climate disasters are already displacing tens of millions of people worldwide every year. Over the past decades, natural disasters have increased in force and frequency, forcing hundreds of millions to leave their homes in a bid to survive. As recent floods, storms, and droughts have shown, the current system is ill prepared to effectively respond to the enormity of this challenge.
Building on these realities our work of the past decade, from 2016-2020 DS is implementing a five-year plan in five focus countries to secure housing, land and property rights for as many climate displaced communities as possible. From the first days of DS involvement in questions of climate displacement, we have advocated for land-based and rights-based practical solutions for those forced to flee their homes and lands. This work commenced in 2007 with our efforts to secure some 7,000 acres of land on the island of Bougainville, PNG for the 3,000-strong community of the Carteret Islands, and now forms a core part of our global work plan. In Bangladesh, together with our partners YPSA have identified 10 land parcels in Chittagong district that we are now seeking to acquire to provide new land resources for the growing climate displaced population in eastern Bangladesh. Our hope is that this method of securing new land resources for at least some of those who are no longer able to live on land they once called home can form a precedent-setting model that will inspire the government of Bangladesh to pursue similar projects on a much larger-scale level throughout the country.

We are also active in Panama, working with the Gunayala indigenous communities of the eastern coastline of the country to find the best way to protect the rights of up to 30,000 people who are now contemplating leaving their small islands for new settlements on the mainland. We were the first organisation to visit the 6000 acre land site in Fiji purchased by the government of Kiribati, and also the only group that has sought to estimate the total amount of land required globally to ensure access to new land resources for the entire current and future climate displaced population of the planet; which lies somewhere between 12.5-50 million acres, or 0.14% of the Earth’s land surface (roughly the size of Costa Rica up to the size of Uganda). DS is now expanding our work on the land sector and intends to further advance the struggle for land across the globe.

DS has chosen to work in countries which are among the first in the world to experience displacement caused by climate change and where the affected communities are making efforts to ensure that relocation of their community takes place in a planned and organised manner. Expert missions conducted by DS to assist these communities and their governments in this process have sought to apply the international standards set out in the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States, an international human rights normative framework in which DS played a key initiating role. In this respect, DS is conscious of the fact that international statements of human rights principles can only ever be effective if they are actually used in real life situations, and in this respect DS field missions aim to operationalise the Principles.
Consequently, from 2016-2020 DS is implementing its *Climate Displacement Land Initiative (CDLI)* with local partners in Bangladesh, Colombia, Fiji, Panama and the Solomon Islands. Work in three of these countries was carried out in 2016 - Bangladesh, Panama and Solomon Islands - some of the key actions in this regard include the following:

**BANGLADESH**

DS has been active in Bangladesh since 2011 when it commenced the Bangladesh HLP Initiative with its close partner Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), one of the country’s oldest and most effective NGOs. Every year, sudden and slow onset natural hazards lead to forced displacement across Bangladesh. Sea level rise, storm surges, tropical cyclones, drought, landslides, riverbank erosion, flooding, salinity and water logging all displace large numbers of people from their homes and lands. Between 2008 and 2014 it is estimated that 4.7 million people were displaced due to disasters in Bangladesh. As climate change leads to more frequent and intense natural hazards, it is expected that climate displacement will only increase in Bangladesh, with estimates suggesting that up to 18 million people may be displaced by sea level rise alone. The Government of Bangladesh has acknowledged that by 2050, one in every 7 people in Bangladesh will be displaced by climate change. The vast majority of current and future climate displacement is projected to occur within Bangladesh, and not across international borders.

Our work with YPSA has sought to ensure that climate displacement is effectively addressed in Bangladesh within a rights-based framework. This work emphasises that climate displaced persons in Bangladesh are especially vulnerable to the violation of their housing, land and property rights, and that respect for HLP rights is a vital element in protecting against, responding to and resolving climate displacement. Over the past six years, the Bangladesh HLP Initiative has engaged in comprehensive fieldwork across the country, carrying out field research and meetings with communities displaced by climate hazards, communities at risk of climate displacement, local and national government representatives and officials, UN staff, civil society, academics and the media; publishing a series of innovative and influential reports addressing the need to implement rights based solutions to prevent, respond to and resolve climate displacement; conducting training and capacity building for civil society representatives on the human rights and HLP rights of climate displacement persons in Bangladesh; supporting the creation of the “Lawyers Initiative for Displacement Solutions”, an association of lawyers and trainee judges committed to protecting the rights of climate displaced persons in Bangladesh; and undertaking advocacy with key Government officials, representatives and leaders of political parties, encouraging the adoption of effective legal and policy reform on the rights of climate displaced persons.
In 2016, for the fifth year running, DS carried out extensive advocacy in Bangladesh to seek solutions for the large numbers of people in the country facing displacement due to climate change. Given the scale of the problem, DS actively promoted the implementation of the Peninsula Principles in government policy and planning processes leading to the Principles being posted on the government of Bangladesh’s climate change website, indicating at least tacit official recognition of their importance. As a result, the Peninsula Principles have been instrumental in defining the scope and direction of Bangladesh’s National Strategy for Disaster and Climate Induced Internal Displacement. Their importance to high-level policies such as these demonstrates their growing global influence and relevance. The potentially positive impact the Peninsula Principles can have on millions of lives is only growing as those displaced by climate change face multiple human rights challenges.

Also in 2016, the Lawyers Initiative for Displacement Solutions (LIDS) commenced its work with the support of DS and the Bangladesh HLP Initiative. LIDS is committed to enhancing the knowledge of climate displacement among the legal profession in Bangladesh and advocates for more effective laws and policy to protect the rights of climate displaced persons in Bangladesh. LIDS is investigating the possibility of strategic (public interest) litigation on behalf of climate displaced persons under the Constitution of Bangladesh. DS strongly believes that the legal profession has a vital and unique role to play in protecting the rights of climate displaced persons in Bangladesh. Since 2011, DS and the Bangladesh HLP Initiative have provided a series of training and capacity building events and workshops for lawyers and trainee judges in Bangladesh. These events were led by national and international legal experts and led directly to the launching of LIDS in 2015.

The One House, One Family at a Time Project in Bangladesh (OHOF)

The One House, One Family at a Time Project raises funds for the procurement of land and the construction of homes for particularly vulnerable families in Bangladesh who have been displaced due to the effects of climate change. The Project enables individuals anywhere in the world to donate funds towards the purchase of ‘one house at a time’ for people displaced by climate change in Bangladesh. DS acquired the first donation under the Project in early 2016 from the Dutch foundation Stichting FortUna. DS subsequently matched those funds to enable the first two houses to be built for two vulnerable climate displaced families in eastern Bangladesh, at the very reasonable cost of USD 8400 per family. Subsequently, Stichting FortUna provided funds for two additional houses, leading to the completion of the first four houses of the OHOF. These homes were handed over to their new inhabitants in early 2017.

One of the houses constructed for climate-displaced families under the DS/YPSA One House One Family at a time project in Bangladesh
DS and YPSA will continue the OHOF project in coming years and encourages all interested readers to contact us to see how to become involved in providing direct assistance to a climate displaced family in Bangladesh. 100% of any funds contributed go directly towards the construction of new homes, with both DS and YPSA receiving no funds from the Project. With this project we are providing direct support to climate displaced families and solving their displacement. Help us do more!

PANAMA

In September 2016 Displacement Solutions carried out its fourth field research and advocacy mission to examine climate displacement and the attempts of affected island communities to relocate to the mainland in the Gunayala region of Panama. Displacement Solutions has been following the relocation efforts of the indigenous Guna people of the island of Gardi Sugdub for more than three years, which we believe could provide a model of how to resolve climate displacement for the Gunayala region and beyond. In our latest visit to the region we found that there are now more and more island communities in Gunayala which are being forced to consider relocating to the mainland as a combined result of a lack of space caused by an ever increasing population, rising sea levels and other effects of climate change.

As found in previous visits, the Guna communities living on the islands continue to be well-organised, with the Gardi Sugdub islanders having taken considerable steps themselves towards relocation. We also discovered during the 2016 field visit that other islands are now set to follow, with some having already taken some initial steps towards relocation, while others that would like to relocate not yet having taken concrete steps towards that goal.

Our report of our 2016 field visit sets out the various opportunities, challenges and pitfalls posed by the relocation process, ranging from the opportunity created by the fact that the availability of land on the mainland to relocate to, does not present a major obstacle in Gunayala as it does in many other similar scenarios in other countries around the world, to the challenges posed by the need to provide - in addition to new housing - the infrastructure and other technical support required to ensure that the relocation is successful.
As DS has documented since 2014, the community of Gardi Sugdub has already carried out extensive planning for their eventual relocation to the mainland. Currently, the people from Gardi Sugdub are waiting for the government to fulfill its promise to build 300 houses for the relocation while their traditional and community leaders have followed the process closely by contacting by phone, social media and face-to-face meetings with different government officials at the Panamanian Ministry of Housing.

In our latest report, we show that the community of Playón Chico is the second island community that has initiated relocation processes. Although their efforts are not as organized or advanced as Gardi Sugdub, they have other factors that could facilitate the success of their relocation effort. These factors include proximity to the coast, the fact that the island is already connected by a pedestrian bridge, that some infrastructure already exists on the mainland, and the experience of a group of people living on the island and in Panama City that were involved in their previous attempt to relocate approximately 30 years ago. We have no doubts that Playón Chico has started a process that is irreversible.

DS believes that if the Guna communities are not assisted as soon as possible in their preventive relocation to the mainland, there is a serious risk that when the sea level reaches a trigger point, or when a natural disaster strikes, they will probably be forced to move to the slums of Panama City where they would lose their livelihoods and traditional way of life. This would clearly be a great loss not only for the affected communities themselves, but also more broadly to the indigenous culture of Panama.

DS has been calling on the Panamanian government since 2014 to apply the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States regarding the relocation of island communities in Gunayala. The Panamanian government has made several promises to assist the community of Gardi Sugdub to relocate, which has been very encouraging, but there has been little in the way of concrete action to date. DS has made a series of recommendations regarding the support and assistance which is required to support the relocation process on which it will continue to work with the government of Panama, as well as international actors like the Inter-American Development Bank, which is already engaged with projects to support indigenous peoples in Panama and in the Gunayala region.
SOLOMON ISLANDS

A growing proportion of the 560,000 people who call the Solomon Islands home have been or will be affected by climate displacement. A series of internal relocation measures have already been undertaken across the country, with further relocation plans to be implemented in the coming five-year period. Most of the relocation undertaken thus far has been in the provinces of Malaita and Temotu. Low-lying coastal areas on the mainland, notably Lilisiana on Auki Harbor, as well as the entire atoll of Ontong Java – which is one of the world’s largest atolls – are also slated for relocation due to continually worsening conditions. The government of the Solomon Islands has developed a number of national policies and plans which recognize the need for the resettlement of communities affected by climate change and the acquisition of land for this purpose. These provide a solid basis for the work planned under the CDLI to develop a clear framework on how this will take place. In particular, the acquisition of customary land for relocation needs to be examined carefully in the Solomons due to the complexity of the system, and the need for an adequate process of consultation and negotiation between landowners, Churches and the state. DS has extensive experience in the Solomon Islands, including a two-month research visit to Ontong Java in mid-2015, and maintains wide networks in the country. DS carried out extensive preliminary research and then commissioned a photo-journalist who carried out a two-month-long field mission in June-July 2015 to the isolated atoll of Ontong Java, Solomon Islands to document the human face of climate displacement and determine how best to use the Peninsula Principles to benefit the population of the atoll. This mission was the first-ever to visit the atoll for an extended period with the purpose of examining the issue of climate displacement and what the residents wished to do about their increasingly precarious situation. The 2,000 residents of Ontong Java will need to relocate their entire society to larger and safer islands in other parts of the Solomon Islands in the near future. The mission and its resulting report, photographs and film received extensive media attention, all of which are available on the DS website. Our report Climate Displacement in Ontong Java Atoll, Solomon Islands and our film on the same theme were some of the first efforts to draw international attention to the very dire circumstances facing the people who call Ontong Java home.

Mission to Lau Lagoon, Malaita

In late 2016, DS conducted a field visit to Lau Lagoon on the island of Malaita to document the challenges facing island dwellers in the Lau Lagoon. The photo essay that emerged from the mission builds on earlier efforts of the Initiative in the country, most notably our groundbreaking work on Ontong Java Atoll. Perched on the north-east tip of Malaita in the Solomon Islands archipelago, the Lau Lagoon covers 35 square km of shallow reef. It is shadowed by the island of Maana‘Oba in its northern reaches and exposed to the deep Western Pacific
Ocean in its central and southern parts. Dotted throughout the lagoon are nearly 100 man-made islands of coral that house anywhere from five to 400 people each. Increasing numbers of these islands now lay uninhabited as residents flee the ever-worsening consequences of climate-change that are destroying their homes and making island life increasingly unviable.

According to locals, the islands were first conceived and built some 16-18 generations ago, dating them back to the 17th Century. Throughout this time, the islands have stood strong and continued to increase in number, with only maintenance and occasional repair required. Today the islands are dealing with a different set of circumstances that have been brought about by climate change. The seas are rising, the weather is extreme and the seasons increasingly unpredictable. These circumstances caused the artificial island of Tauba1 to first submerge completely underwater during a high tide sometime around 2005. Tauba1 is just one of the many islands of the Lau Lagoon, and serves well as an example of the common plight of islands in the lagoon. Our photo essay Solomon Islands: Climate Displacement in Lau Lagoon is available on the DS website.

THE MYANMAR HLP INITIATIVE

DS has been active in Myanmar for many years working on a wide range of issues relating to housing, land and property rights in the country under the auspices of the Myanmar HLP Initiative. In 2016 this work concentrated on three key themes: Engagement within the Land Sector, Restitution in Myanmar and the concept of a Myanmar National Climate Land Bank:

ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE LAND SECTOR

DS visited Myanmar for a two-week DS mission in May 2016 to explore recent developments in the land sector, and the prospects for restitution forming part of the expanding peace process in the country. With the new NLD-led government in power for the first time, the prospects for positive action within the land sector are noteworthy. DS worked together with the Overseas Development Institute
(ODI) in developing recommendations for the British Government’s aid agency DFID, and how the UK might best support land-related activities in the context of the peace process. Land is a key negotiating issue between the government and the various ethnic negotiating partners, and will invariably form a key basis for the eventual conclusion of peace agreements in the future.

**RESTITUTION IN MYANMAR**

The processes of housing, land and property restitution have as their key purpose the aim of reversing past HLP losses and returning HLP rights back to those with legitimate restitution claims, and enabling refugees and IDPs to reclaim their former homes and lands. These processes may seem overly optimistic, but in fact restitution processes have been carried out in numerous countries over the past three decades or more. Successful restitution programmes provide a pathway for residential justice, and create the conditions needed for all refugees and displaced persons to repossess control over their places of origin or to otherwise receive recognition of these losses through the provision of adequate compensation. Restitution provides the means by which all returning refugees and IDPs can be assured of the full enjoyment of their human rights, in particular their housing, land and property rights.

DS and our partners the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) have been involved in restitution efforts in a number of countries over the past two decades, and believe that increasing attention to the benefits of establishing specific post-conflict restitution mechanisms that would enable everyone with a restitution claim to have access to an appropriate remedial mechanism will facilitate voluntary repatriation and return of refugees and IDPs in Myanmar.

Some of the building blocks for a nationwide restitution process are in place. Article 1(k) of the 15 October 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement includes several references to HLP issues, while Chapter VI of the 2016 National Land Use Policy includes general guidance on how a restitution process could potentially take place. Moreover, bodies such as the Reinvestigation Committee for Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands have been established to address some types of outstanding restitution claims. A number of international and local NGOs are currently advocating for the protection of the rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and other individuals affected by arbitrary takings of property in the past. These efforts should be encouraged. In October and December 2016, DS and NRC undertook a series of consultations in Yangon that confirmed the need to support the development of civil society-led advocacy strategies on restitution in Myanmar taking into account all available options.
In Myanmar, land disputes and displacement are already contentious issues and are likely to worsen as the effects of climate change increase across the country. In particular, without appropriate counter-measures and innovative policies, conflict over land is likely to increase as large numbers of people affected by rising sea levels can no longer remain in their homes along the country’s lengthy coastline and seek to relocate to higher ground. If not managed properly, this process could all too easily result in tension, violence, and even new forms of conflict. Indeed, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, has spoken of the ‘stark and vital’ implications of climate change for the full enjoyment of human rights, and the ‘multiple implications’ of climate change ‘for displacement, statelessness, land-rights, resources, security and development.’ Preventing such conflict is one of the key aims of this project. In policy terms, therefore, there is a pressing need in Myanmar to identify and allocate land at a level commensurate with the scale of present and likely future climate displacement in the development of domestic strategies and laws to address the problem.

The establishment of a Myanmar National Climate Land Bank (MNCLB) would act as the central institutional tool in this process. The aim of the MNCLB would be to set up land set-aside programmes of parcels of State land in a bid to prevent land conflict and resolve climate displacement in a rights-based manner throughout the country. The MNCLB would provide a basis for developing concrete policies that tie together four vital policy threads: conflict prevention, climate change, displacement and access to land. The central importance of land for security, stability and economic development is already well recognised by the present government and by all organs of civil society, which has commenced identifying State land resources for eventual distribution to landless rural poor households as part of broader land reform efforts. In this context, the establishment of the MNCLB would be a further element of broader land reform measures, which are already underway in the country. The MNCLB would act as a central repository for State land designated exclusively for the use of climate displaced persons and communities, and would also be the lead agency for ensuring that the climate displaced are able to obtain new homes and new lands on those plots.

The ultimate outcome of the project would be to establish a National Climate Land Bank in Myanmar by September 2018. In the lead-up to the MNCLB’s establishment, the project will involve a series of in-depth field visits to affected coastal areas, a feasibility study and a series of initial land identification efforts. A policy framework and procedural guidelines for the MNCLB’s activities will also be drawn up. The process will include land identification efforts in three coastal states in areas already threatened by and experiencing climate displacement, and will aim to initially classify several thousand acres of earmarked State land to be placed under the management of the MNCLB. Once a sufficient land base has been identified and classified, the MNCLB will then commence activities and begin considering community requests for new land, in accordance with agreed procedures, from communities that require planned relocation because due to the direct effects of climate change upon the viability of their present communities. Efforts would also then commence to access larger parcels of State land additional acres of land to be placed under the administration of the MNCLB.
ROUND TABLE ON LAND ACCESS AND CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT

DS and the Geneva-based Global Migration Center of the Geneva Graduate Institute Graduate Institute for Development Studies (HEI) co-hosted a Roundtable on Land Access and Climate Displacement in Geneva, Switzerland from 25-26 April 2016. The meeting brought together participants from 20 countries that are already grappling with climate displacement and seeking land solutions to resolve these challenges. DS works to varying degrees with all of the participants, but this unique group has never had the opportunity to assemble together in one room to discuss their efforts, the challenges they face or the strategies they have used to find land for the communities with whom they work.

The meeting was held at a time when the very issue of climate displacement - even the term itself - remains the source of considerable debate, discussion and sometimes disagreement in terms of its scale, location, time-frame, the rights dimensions of it and the best policy prescriptions available to address it. The Roundtable generated a series of innovative ideas for how best to improve the prospects of climate-displaced people wherever they may reside.

This Roundtable - which was held in conjunction with a four-month Exhibition of the Where Will We Go? multi-media display - provided a unique venue for promoting the application of the Peninsula Principles and for the continued strengthening of the global network of people and groups dedicated to pursuing rights-based land solutions to climate displacement.
The purpose of the meeting was to consolidate DS efforts in conjunction with its 2016-2020 *Climate Displacement Land Initiative*, and to develop specific country plans for the acquisition of land for climate displaced communities in each of the participating countries. An excellent group of experts participated in this unique meeting, including Carlos Arenas (DS), Alexandra Bilak (International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)), Robin Bronen (Alaska Immigration Justice Project), Vincent Chetail (Global Migration Centre), Jennifer Duncan (Landesa), Julia Edwards (Chaoticnature), Joseph Foukona (University of South Pacific), Ellen Hansen (UNHCR), Khaled Hassine (Mandate of the Independent Expert on Older Persons), Yves Lador (Earthjustice), Scott Leckie (DS), Sylvie Leget (Hoffmann Foundation), Dan Lewis (UN-HABITAT), Blas Lopez (Guna Indigenous community Panama), Barbara McCallin (Consultant on HLP issues), Prof. Anthony Oliver-Smith (University of Florida, Arifur Rahman (Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)), Graham Saunders (IFRC), Susanne Schwan (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)), Mohammed Shahjahan (YPSA), Michael Siebert (GIZ), Ezekiel Simperingham (DS), Atle Solberg (Nansen Initiative), Jon Staley (YouthworxMedia), Simon Studer (DS Board), Matthias Vn Hein (Deutsche Welle (DW) and DS Board Chairperson), Nadine Walicki (IDMC), Michelle Yonetani (IDMC) and Robert Zoells (DS Board).

After two intensive days of discussion, the Roundtable adopted THE CLIMATE LAND STATEMENT. The brief statement, agreed by consensus, outlines seven steps that should be pursued by all States, UN agencies and others to protect the rights of climate displaced persons and communities throughout the international community. Among other things, the Statement affirms the central role of land in resolving climate displacement, as well as urging authorities to assemble national land inventories for land to be allocated to those in need of new homes and lands.
WE, THE PARTICIPANTS AT A ROUNDTABLE ON IMPROVING LAND ACCESS AND CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT, ORGANISED BY DISPLACEMENT SOLUTIONS WITH THE GLOBAL MIGRATION CENTER OF THE GENEVA GRADUATE INSTITUTE, AND HELD IN GENEVA FROM 25-26 APRIL 2016 EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN THAT EVENTS AND PROCESSES CAUSED OR EXACERBATED BY CLIMATE CHANGE HAVE CONTRIBUTED AND WILL CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE LARGE-SCALE DISPLACEMENT OF POPULATIONS.

We are cognizant of the fact that climate displacement, if not properly planned for and managed, may lead to the violation of internationally recognised human rights, as well as tensions and instability within States and across national borders.

While some States have initiated important steps to find viable, land-based solutions to climate displacement, we remain concerned that, in general far too little has been done by States to develop institutions and implement concrete measures to assist climate displaced communities and those threatened with climate displacement.

THE CLIMATE LAND STATEMENT
ON IMPROVING LAND ACCESS FOR CLIMATE DISPLACED PERSONS AND COMMUNITIES

Geneva, 26 April 2016

WWW.DISPLACEMENTSOLUTIONS.ORG

WE THEREFORE CALL UPON STATES, INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND OTHERS, TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING SEVEN ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF CLIMATE DISPLACED PERSONS AND COMMUNITIES WITHOUT DELAY:

1. Apply and enforce human rights laws and guidelines, including the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement Within States, as core elements within effective national strategies recognizing that climate displaced persons and communities are rights-holders under human rights law;
2. Reaffirm and enhance the protection and promotion of the rights of climate displaced persons, in particular their housing, land and property (HLP) rights;
3. Recognise the right of climate displaced persons to remain in their homes and retain connections to the land on which they live for as long as possible, and to ensure that any planned relocation measures are entirely voluntary in nature and in conformity with international standards;
4. Affirm the central role of land in resolving climate displacement in a sustainable manner, and the need to increase secure access to land in the development of viable domestic strategies, laws and policies designed to prevent and repair climate displacement;
5. Identify, Acquire and Allocate viable, high quality and affordable land resources at a level commensurate with the scale of present and likely future climate displacement in all countries to all persons and communities requiring such resources;
6. Assemble national land inventories to act as central repositories for land set aside for the use of climate displaced persons and communities; and
7. Develop clear national policies and effective institutional frameworks dedicated to preventing and repairing climate displacement.
INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY TO PROMOTE THE PENINSULA PRINCIPLES AT THE UN

Since the approval of the Peninsula Principles in August 2013, DS has carried out extensive global advocacy designed to spread awareness of the Principles to achieve ever-greater levels of their direct application in concrete cases of climate displacement. In the field, DS engaged in advocacy with the governments of Bangladesh, Colombia, Fiji, Panama and Solomon Islands, to provide information and assistance on how the Principles can assist these governments in their efforts of planned relocation of coastal villages threatened by rising sea levels. Mass dissemination of copies of the Principles to as many government officials as possible was carried out in Geneva, where a vast number of countries have representation. Promotional meetings were also held with these governments, as well as UN and other inter-governmental agencies, reaching a broad range of policy makers and institutions in the process. DS also engaged in numerous high-level discussions with the leadership of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights about the Principles, and discussed plans of action to promote the application of the Principles with UNU-EHA in Bonn, UN Habitat, and a series of other UN agencies.

A 2016 report issued by the United Nations Human Rights Council gives extensive and positive coverage to the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement Within States. The report, prepared by UN human rights expert of the Advisory Committee to the Human Rights Council, Mr. Imeru Tamrat Yigezu of Ethiopia, describes the 2013 Principles as providing “a solid foundation for the protection of the specific needs of those internally displaced by climate change in line with a human-rights based approach and are consistent with international human rights standards and humanitarian law”. The 12 August 2016 report (UN doc: A/HRC/AC/17/2) makes clear the human rights dimensions of climate displacement and specifically recommends that the Council implement two key recommendations:

1. That the Advisory Committee undertake to prepare guidelines (‘soft guidelines’) on climate displacement and human rights, based on existing frameworks such as the Guiding Principles on IDPs and the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States, which are grounded in the existing international framework; and

2. Alternatively, that the Advisory Committee could prepare a report on the question of a human rights-based planned relocation to cases of looming climate displacement.

It is hoped the Human Rights Council will accept Tamrat’s recommendations, and that attention to the rights of climate displaced persons and communities at last begin to get the structural attention and protection they deserve.

HLP ISSUES IN SYRIA

On the request of the UN, in 2016 DS prepared two background papers on HLP issues in Syria entitled Housing, Land and Property Rights and Peace Agreements: Options for Syria and Housing, Land and Property Restitution and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms as Key Prerequisites for Sustainable Peace and Reconciliation: Options for Syria. This work will continue and expand in 2017.
THE ‘WHERE WILL WE GO’ EXHIBITION

DS and World Press Photo Award-winning international photo journalist Kadir van Lohuizen staged the Where Will We Go exhibition, a multimedia display which shows visitors graphic evidence of the scale and ferocity of climate displacement throughout the world. With the support of the UN Environment Programme, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NOOR photo agency, the Exhibition was launched at the UN climate change talks in Lima, Peru in December 2014. Since then, it was shown in the USA, the Netherlands, China, Chile, and France during the Paris December UN Climate Change Talks. In 2016 it appeared in Geneva from January-May 2016, as well as underneath the Brooklyn bridge in New York City. Most notably, the exhibition appeared in the main lobby of the UN Headquarters for several weeks, following a launch by both Kadir and the Netherlands Foreign Minister, Bart Koenders.

LAW SCHOOL COURSES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISPLACEMENT

DS worked throughout 2016 to expand the hosting of the advanced law school course on Climate Change and Displacement. DS Director Scott Leckie taught a new law school course at Monash Law School in Melbourne, Australia from 19-23 September 2016 on ‘Climate Governance and Citizen Justice’. This new course examines all recent developments on climate governance since the successful conclusion of the Paris Climate Change talks in December 2015, with a particular focus on climate justice for people negatively affected by climate change.

DS WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT & MEDIA

Throughout 2016, DS regularly edited, updated and redesigned the DS website which was launched in October 2014 and is designed to serve as a major global source of information on climate displacement. DS received extensive media coverage in 2016, copies of which are available on the DS website - www.displacementsolutions.org

‘THE LAND SEEKERS’ DOCUMENTARY FILM

In 2015 DS commenced a partnership with YouthworxMedia to produce a new documentary film about the people and organisations in Bangladesh, Kiribati, Panama and the Solomon Islands who are actively seeking to find land resources for the world’s growing climate displaced populations. It is hoped that the film will be completed by December 2017.
All DS publications are available for free review and download on the DS website. The following is a list of DS publications in 2016:


Displacement Solutions and Climate Change at a Glance

The Rights of Climate Displaced Persons: A Quick Guide (in Bengali)

Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement Within States (in Japanese)

The Critical Role of Land Use Planning in Preventing and Resolving Climate Displacement

A Photo Essay on Climate Displacement in the Solomon Islands: Lau Lagoon Mission

When Adaptation Fails: Planned Relocation as a Rights-Based Response to Climate Displacement

Selected Options for a DFID-Supported Peacebuilding Programme on Land in Burma
PLANNED ACTIVITIES - 2017

Building on the outputs and results, a broad array of activities will be prioritized in 2017. These include, but are not limited to:

RESTITUTION IN MYANMAR

The restitution of housing, land and property rights after conflicts and periods of non-democratic governance are fundamental aspects of transitional justice which are essential for the achievement of durable solutions to forced displacement, and to broader concerns of peace, reconciliation and economic prosperity. DS and NRC have been involved in restitution efforts in a number of countries, and believe that increasing attention to the benefits of establishing specific post-conflict restitution mechanisms that would enable everyone with a restitution claim to have access to an appropriate remedial mechanism will facilitate voluntary repatriation and return of refugees and IDPs in Myanmar.

In 2017 we will launch our three new publications on various aspects of restitution in Myanmar in Yangon, as well as carrying out further work towards designing a new restitution law and mechanism, preparing an edited volume on restitution in Myanmar and further generating political support for these activities in the country. The publications are: A Framework for Resolving Displacement in Myanmar: The United Nations ‘Pinheiro Principles’ on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons, An Introductory Guide to Understanding and Claiming Housing, Land and Property Restitution Rights in Myanmar: Questions and Answers and Restitution in Myanmar: Building Lasting Peace, National Reconciliation and Economic Prosperity Through a Comprehensive Housing, Land and Property Restitution Programme.

BUILDING A MYANMAR NATIONAL CLIMATE LAND BANK

The project will continue in 2017 with field visits to particularly vulnerable coastal areas in Myanmar beginning with meetings with villagers in several parts of the delta region of the country and the identification of land parcels suitable for eventual relocation should this become necessary. DS will work with experts from Ecodev to identify the most vulnerable coastal communities and further expand work on the project to other areas in the country.
PHASE ONE OF THE CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT LAND INITIATIVE (CLDI)

DS will continue the implementation of Phase One of the CDLI in early 2017 with the appointment of research and coordination teams in Bangladesh, Colombia, Fiji, Panama and Solomon Islands. Research will commence in each country focusing on geographical areas and communities under particular threat of displacement due to climate change.

This will result in country reports which diagnose the precise scale of threatened climate displacement in terms of numbers of people affected and number of acres of land affected, as well as identify key leaders in each of the affected communities with whom we can engage in the quest for land-based solutions throughout the duration of the project.

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

DS will continue lobbying efforts in Geneva to gain greater attention to the Peninsula Principles. A focus on gaining governmental endorsements of the Principles will continue to be a key aim in 2017, as will the objective of including additional references to, and possibly, the full text of the Principles within as many UN documents and publications as possible. In addition, efforts will be made to generate interest by national bar associations in the Principles. Discussions will also be held to determine the viability of a possible summer school course on the Principles. In addition, special attention will be placed on UN human rights special rapporteurs and how they each might support the application of the Principles within their respective mandates.

WHERE WILL WE GO EXHIBITION

As noted above, the Where Will We Go (WWWG) Exhibition was launched in December 2014 at the UN Climate Change meetings in Lima, Peru. The WWWG has since appeared at several additional venues in Chile, China, France, the Netherlands, and the US. To date, hundreds of thousands of people have viewed the extraordinary exhibition developed from photographs taken by close DS associate and World Press Photo award winner Kadir van Lohuizen.
UNIVERSITY & LAW SCHOOL COURSES
DS will continue to seek to expand the number of universities offering such courses from the current total of four universities to ten. Moreover, DS will prepare a new course design for a planning and climate change course designed for domestic policy-makers. The course will be presented at the University of Melbourne School of Law in September 2017.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT & MEDIA
DS will continue to expand, update and refine the new DS website throughout 2017 to ensure ever improving ease of use and to raise the overall profile of climate displacement. DS will continue to liaise with media, issuing occasional press releases and providing interviews with international media sources.

THE LAND SEEKERS FILM
DS will also support the production of a film about the people and organisations in Bangladesh, Kiribati, Panama and the Solomon Islands who are actively seeking to find land resources for the world’s growing climate displaced populations.

ONE HOUSE, ONE FAMILY AT A TIME PROJECT
Following the construction of the first four houses supported under the project, efforts will be made in 2017 to raise more funds to complete additional houses for more climate displaced families in eastern Bangladesh will also be conducted, with a view to commencing construction of new houses in the course of the year.

Back Cover image: Climate change is everywhere. Severe coastal erosion destroys both the beach and walkway near the DS Asia-Pacific office.