



Wilton Park



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Report

Internally Displaced Persons: towards more effective international protection and durable solutions

Monday 2 – Wednesday 4 September 2019 | WP1705

In association with:



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Federal Department of
Foreign Affairs FDFA



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



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Internally Displaced Persons: towards more effective international protection and durable solutions

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Executive summary

There are more than 41 million people displaced internally as the result of conflict and violence, with significant additional numbers due to climate and disaster situations. Since January 2019, higher than average levels of new displacement have been recorded; furthermore many existing IDP situations are protracted. This context is challenging with regard to protection needs and responses.

Durable solutions for internal displacement should be planned for at the outset, and interventions should focus on both short-term needs and longer-term resilience. Durable solutions should remain dynamic in response to fluid displacement contexts. The design and implementation of workable solutions requires reliable data and analysis, but these present significant challenges. Categorisation is particularly problematic. Categories are useful to indicate specific vulnerabilities and protection needs, but they can stigmatise people and create or exacerbate tensions with other populations and thus be detrimental. IDP protection should therefore remain wary of creating new categories of citizens.

Government led approaches should be prioritised where feasible, however there are ongoing tensions for sovereign states in ensuring adequate protection for IDPs. Government led responses should combine different approaches: the linking of protection and durable solutions to national development plans could provide a useful entry-point and be more sustainable in the longer term.

Solutions and interventions should not be limited to people who have been displaced; they should include all those affected by displacement. IDPs should be brought into the planning and delivery of responses and durable solutions at every stage; their own capacity and intentions for solutions to their displacement and longer-term futures must remain central.

Other actors, including the private sector, civil society, academia, international institutions and wider development actors, can all play important roles in prevention, protection and durable solutions. To be effective, this requires joined-up action, improved lesson sharing, and an exploration of financing models. The creation of a humanitarian-development-peace nexus is an important part of this integrated, cross-cutting approach.

Introduction and background

1. Ten years on from the adoption of the Kampala Convention on Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa and in the context of the United Nations (UN) High Level Panel, this Wilton Park conference explored ways in which to galvanise international engagement towards increased prevention, protection and durable solutions for IDPs.
2. The conference was held in support of ongoing activities and initiatives across the international community, including the African Union's 2019 Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced People, the GP20 Plan of Action and Agenda 2030.
3. Prevention, protection and durable solutions were explored and, drawing from examples of existing best practice from a range of countries and regions, discussions aimed to:
 - Consider ways in which to enhance national, regional and international policy and legal frameworks, taking into account the needs of IDPs and their hosts
 - Develop and strengthen collaborative approaches towards increased resourcing and buy-in across a range of actors
 - Highlight the particular protection needs of the most vulnerable
 - Explore the potential for increased coherence of international humanitarian and development assistance with regard to affected individuals and regions.
 - Generate recommendations for future joint working across a range of stakeholders
4. There are now more than 41 million people displaced internally due to conflict and violence, with significant additional numbers due to climate and disaster situations. Since January 2019, higher than average levels of new displacement have been recorded. In addition, many other IDP situations are protracted. This has heightened existing problems and created new challenges for protection needs and responses.

“There are now more than 41 million people displaced internally due to conflict and violence, with significant additional numbers due to climate and disaster situations”

Understanding drivers and dynamics of internal displacement

5. There are numerous, often overlapping drivers of internal displacement, including urbanisation, climate change and natural disaster, alongside protracted IDP situations. In addition, emerging, current and future drivers include development-induced displacement; human rights abuses; demographic growth; and ‘traditional’ political and security related factors.

Urbanisation

6. IDP situations are increasingly urban, generating new challenges, risks and opportunities. Urbanisation can be both a driver and consequence of IDP situations. Whilst often simultaneously dealing with other dynamics of rapid urbanisation (for example population growth, presence of other vulnerable communities, economic growth and development projects, unplanned urban settlements), cities may be unable to respond to the scale and speed by which IDPs often arrive in urban spaces. There is a risk that IDPs in urban areas ‘disappear’ and are counted among the urban poor, yet their specific vulnerabilities persist. Prevention, protection, and durable solutions to IDP situations in urban settings should therefore:
 - Tie IDP responses into wider city planning, whilst maintaining protection for specific IDP vulnerabilities
 - Bring human settlement issues (for example housing, land, water, property issues) to the fore in protection planning, rather than considering as an ‘add-on’

“Urbanisation can be both a driver and consequence of IDP situations”

“Mass displacement caused by extreme weather events has become the new ‘normal’”

- Examine possibilities to engage with city planners to move from unplanned to planned urban settlements
- Consider using a human settlements framework as an entry-point to ‘buy-in’ from the private sector, governments and other actors to ensure community protection, particularly where appetite for IDP-specific protection is lacking. For example, this could include working with city planners to tackle housing and land access in unplanned settlements
- Move beyond the focus on return as a durable solution, noting that IDPs may have already been planning a move to the city in their planned life trajectories, and could be unwilling to return to rural areas

Climate change and natural disaster

7. Mass displacement caused by extreme weather events has become the new ‘normal’. A record number of disasters have already triggered mass IDP situations in 2019. Protracted, repeated and cyclical displacement has also become the norm for many. Climate change, coupled with conflict, will intensify the effects.
8. Climate change causes a shift in the geography of displacement –some states in the Global North are unwilling to accept that they have IDPs as a result of climate change.
9. Recognition of climate change and climate-induced displacement is highly political. IDPs and climate change should be addressed across multiple UN agency mandates, given the cross-cutting nature.

Protracted displacement

10. A renewed approach is needed. Durable solutions for protracted displacement should be attentive to context-specific dynamics, including situations in which people are unable or unwilling to return. They should facilitate IDPs’ capacities to progressively reduce their vulnerability and take steps towards a self-sufficient, dignified life. There is currently a lack of flexibility in thinking about durable solutions, however, over time, the initial dynamics causing IDP situations may change. A nuanced understanding of the causes of the ‘protractedness’ of internal displacement should include not only ongoing conflict and/or disaster but also lack of political will; inadequate normative and institutional frameworks; entrenched discrimination, evictions and other human rights violations; aid dependency; lack of engagement from international actors to shift beyond emergency humanitarian assistance; and lack of financing focused on addressing protracted displacement.
11. Protracted displacement necessitates long-term thinking. Shorter-term responses, which may be linked to political cycles and other agenda, are at risk of creating unintended consequences in the longer term.

“Protracted displacement necessitates long-term thinking”

Enhancing protection responses

Durable solutions

12. Durable solutions should come into play at the outset of displacement, not when conditions are conducive to return. Protracted displacement risks being a ‘wasted opportunity’ if engagement doesn’t start right away, and IDPs cannot wait until the root causes of their displacement are resolved. Assistance from the first phase of displacement, including psycho-social attention, helps people feel valued and part of the solution – the relationship should be premised on people’s own capacities and aspirations for the future, not on a rigid, pre-existing durable solutions framework applied at the end of displacement.
13. Intervention should focus on short term needs as well as longer-term resilience, noting that long-term solutions should not assume a return to old realities. Experiences of displacement often open up new opportunities and changed expectations, for example in terms of gender roles, livelihood opportunities and preferences.

“Long-term solutions should not assume a return to old realities”

“Status isn’t static’ and response frameworks should take into account dynamic, fluctuating IDP situations”

14. Further, conflict dynamics often remain in flux, and accordingly, return to normalcy and durable solutions may also change over time. Durable solutions thinking must remain fluid; it is not appropriate to focus on one solution for an entire displaced population.

Categorisation

15. ‘Status isn’t static’ and response frameworks should take into account dynamic, fluctuating IDP situations and remain context-specific. Research and practice have consistently shown that categorisation can be problematic: legal categories are useful in focusing on specific vulnerabilities and protection needs, but they may stigmatise people and create or exacerbate tensions with other populations and thus be detrimental to durable solutions. Further, many people may not self-identify as IDPs, but may, for example, identify as refugees. Frameworks for responding to the challenges of categorisation in a sensitive way should therefore:
 - Remain wary of creating an additional permanent category of citizens, or an additional mechanism within governments for responding to IDP situations. Instead, responses should be inclusive of wider communities where possible
 - Explore using data to keep better track of the specificities of the internally displaced, being careful not to ‘define IDPs away’, for example by re-categorising them among the urban poor
 - Facilitate additional research around when an IDP situation ends, noting that this question can be politically loaded (for example, to decide when a response/mandate ends).

The role of states

16. Government led approaches should be prioritised where feasible. Government responsibility should encompass all levels of government, from member state pledges at international level, down to municipalities. Depending on the context, different levels of government (from top-level to local government ministries) may offer different entry-points for prevention, protection and durable solutions.
17. Rebuilding of trust and responsible governments with a caring architecture should be at the core of the term ‘government led’. This may require recognition of government failures to protect; acknowledgement of these shortfalls and documentation of ‘lessons learned’ are an important first step for transformation. Responses should focus on the restoration of the social contract between states and citizens.
18. ‘Sovereignty has responsibility’. However, in some contexts, governments are unwilling to protect or, are actively causing IDP situations. In others, governments do not have control over all areas within their territory, generating particular challenges to government led responses. Tensions between sovereignty and ensuring protection remain. Thus, government led approaches will need to combine different responses to ensure protection.
19. Some research suggests invoking state responsibility or a universal ethical code of protection does not sufficiently incentivise states. Further exploration into incentives is needed. A demonstration of the potential for longer-term development opportunities, would do much to open up conversations with governments.

Whole of society approaches

20. The linking of protection and durable solutions to national development plans provides a useful entry-point to achieve sustainability. Responses to displacement should be mainstreamed in political, security, economic, and development plans, not be treated as an ‘add-on’.
21. Governments may face challenges dealing with overlapping, sometimes competing mandates of UN agencies; but for sustainability to be achieved, governments should feel it is their own mandate being supported.

“government led approaches will need to combine different responses to ensure protection”

“Solutions and interventions should not be limited to those displaced but rather all those affected by displacement”

22. Solutions and interventions should not be limited to those displaced but rather all those affected by displacement. Incorporation into national development plans and indicators will assist to strengthen-durable solutions in the longer-term. Integration into national development plans may also create opportunities for future legislation in multiple areas of government at multiple levels.

The role of non-state actors

23. Beyond the state, communities can play a key role in creating and facilitating a favourable environment. In the best-case scenarios, these community responders do not act as ‘gate-keepers’; instead they involve IDPs in the planning and delivery of responses and durable solutions, enabling them to self-organise and find solutions for themselves. Good practice examples do exist, but they need additional support and scaling up.
24. On the negative side, non-state actors may include other types of ‘gate-keepers’; people who may block integration, for example by preventing settlement efforts, returns to land or carrying out forced evictions. There are also instances of serious exploitation, whereby IDPs have been trafficked and traded.
25. It is important to find ways of engaging positively with communities, recognising the benefits and addressing the risks. There are particular challenges and debates regarding the extent to which armed groups should be brought into IDP responses.
26. The private sector and civil society can play important roles in building social capital for resilience and sustainability. Good practice examples include roundtables for community participation at municipality-level and the creation of incentives to attract new business to areas responding to climate disaster, such as providing opportunities for young entrepreneurs or new industries.
27. Academia can perform an important function in producing policy relevant research and data collection and analysis. However, there is often a disconnect between policy systems and academic research. Future efforts should seek to close this gap, as well as explore opportunities to train people within universities – particularly within the Global South – to conduct rigorous data collection and independent analysis.

“The private sector and civil society can play important roles in building social capital for resilience and sustainability”

The role of UN institutions

28. The system for IDP protection remains ad hoc. Many frameworks and international institutions do not include IDPs in their protection mandates. UN agencies need to pursue joined-up approaches, to ensure IDP protection is examined in a cross-cutting manner. Work towards the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is a step in the right direction, as is G20. Even within agencies, for example UNHCR, more work is needed to include IDPs within frameworks. International institutions should be able to move beyond ‘turf wars, and competition for funding, in order to work together more effectively and find solutions.
29. Joined-up metrics to measure and report are key, as is an improved awareness of IDP situations and needs across UN agencies and management levels.
30. States should not be expected to coordinate the support they receive from UN agencies when requesting help; UN agencies should coordinate their support internally – the practicalities of this require further discussion.

“Many frameworks and international institutions do not include IDPs in their protection mandates”

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus

31. The creation of a humanitarian-development-peace nexus is important to a cross-cutting response to IDP situations, and should:
 - Address IDP situations as part of national development plans, to facilitate whole of society approaches. This should not be seen as bringing governments on board, but rather governments driving the process

“data is crucial in making decisions around resource allocation”

- Conduct joint assessments that use combined humanitarian and development indicators, in order to create an evidence base for effective action
- Integrate collective outcomes into relevant planning tools, including subnational and local development plans as well as UN planning tools (for example United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and Humanitarian Response Plans). As part of this, implement area-based, outcome-generated programmes that bring together livelihoods, housing, security, reconciliation and peace-building where relevant
- Strengthen the capacity of Resident Co-ordinators and Humanitarian Co-ordinators to support UN country teams and undertake joined-up action
- Set up multi-partner trust funds that combine humanitarian, development and peace-building funding, and that are multi-year, flexible, and are based on collective outcomes (rather than focused on single agencies). This is in line with the 2019 OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
- Make better use of existing mechanisms. For example, add IDPs to existing indicators and reporting requirements as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and explore connections to existing human rights mechanisms

Lesson sharing and coordination: building an ‘IDP brain’

32. Overcoming challenges to coordination should be prioritised, particularly if the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is to be achieved. In the context of limited resources, as well as changing vulnerabilities and IDP situation dynamics, avenues for improved coordination should therefore:

- Explore ways to share lessons learned, between UN agencies but also beyond the UN, to include NGOs and civil society actors, other development organisations, IDPs themselves, governments at various levels, and the private sector. This includes finding ways to overcome the disconnect between those in the field and those working in headquarters locations
- Develop a tool box for planning and responding to IDP situations
- Reflect on what doesn’t work, not solely on what works well
- Conduct a stock-taking exercise, reviewing existing recommendations and commitments on IDPs, to ensure that new responses do not ‘reinvent the wheel’ but rather, build on existing knowledge (this may involve a review of existing stock-takes).

Data

33. Designing and implementing workable solutions requires reliable data and usable analysis. In the context of finite resources, data is crucial in making decisions around resource allocation.

34. However, there are significant challenges concerning reliable data and usable analysis. Existing data tends to be organisation-specific; without coordinated methodologies and approaches, the usability of this data remains limited. Variations in transparency around data limitations also impede the use of data. There remains a focus on collecting data in the context of humanitarian emergency, however as IDP situations grow protracted, this becomes less helpful. Language and translation issues create further challenges, particularly as the term ‘internally displaced person’ does not easily translate across languages.

35. Harmonisation of data should be a priority to inform strong, collective analysis. Pathways to achieve this may seek to:

- Include data on displacement in national surveys to support government-led, centralised data where feasible

“the term ‘internally displaced person’ does not easily translate across languages”

“There is a clear economic dimension to IDPs situations, with low-income countries most affected and yet least able to fund responses”

- Explore ways to include IDPs data that tie up with the SDGs and Agenda 2030
- Shift from ‘emergency’ data often focused on counting IDPs, to data focused on understanding nuanced vulnerabilities in protracted IDP situations
- Focus on collecting ‘clean’ data that can account for different vulnerabilities and make distinctions, for example, between IDPs, returnees and other urban poor groups
- Critically asking why data is needed, rather than collecting data for data’s sake. More evidence does not necessarily mean more data
- Explore tools to visualise data
- Invest in longer-term thinking about data. Harmonisation and collaboration around data takes time and financial resources, and requires patience and trust. Short project cycles do not foster this

Financing

36. There is a clear economic dimension to IDPs situations, with low-income countries most affected and yet least able to fund responses. Estimates place the average cost of basic healthcare, security, housing, temporary education and compensation for loss of income at USD13 billion per year on average, to meet the needs of the current IDP population of over 40 million people, though this is an underestimate as it excludes new displacement, as well as disaster-induced displacement. On this basis:

- Noting that the best source of sustainable solutions come from governments, ensuring funding reaches national budgets, particularly for local municipalities, should be prioritised. Existing development funding models, which tend to reward countries that perform well, are not necessarily suitable in contexts where a country is emerging from a conflict situation and will require additional dedicated resources
- The role of interagency spending committees should be explored further
- Financing mechanisms must be careful to avoid incentivising governments to displace their own populations to secure development funding
- Financing mechanisms should explore priorities and needs that are not necessarily restricted to IDP populations. Other entry-points may be more sustainable and facilitate a more integrated approach, for example widows, or housing
- Lessons should be learned from other financial models, for example the Global Fund to Fight Malaria
- Non-traditional funding, for example from the private sector or remittances, have potential but these need to be brought ‘above water’ in order to be analysed, understood and best mobilised.

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