



OCHA POLICY AND STUDIES SERIES

# **BREAKING THE IMPASSE**

REDUCING PROTRACTED INTERNAL  
DISPLACEMENT AS A COLLECTIVE OUTCOME

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



OCHA

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The global number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has reached an all-time high, as an increasing number of IDPs remain displaced for years or even decades.** In 2014, more than 50 countries were reported to have people living in internal displacement for more than 10 years. As illustrated in the five country case studies informing this report (Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Philippines, Somalia and Ukraine)<sup>i</sup>, a rapidly resolved internal displacement crisis where IDPs find durable solutions—sustainable return, local integration or relocation—has become a rare exception.

**Tens of millions of IDPs are dependent on humanitarian assistance or live far below the poverty line in substandard housing without security of tenure, and with no or only limited access to basic services, education and health care.** They face security concerns, discrimination and financial insecurity, and they often struggle to maintain social cohesion among themselves and with host communities. Women, older people and people with disabilities are particularly affected, while young people are left with little chance for a better future. For example, the 1.1 million IDPs in Somalia account for 58 per cent of the total food insecure population, and they are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, forced evictions and marginalization. In the Philippines, people can be displaced numerous times in a single year to avoid military operations, violence or disasters, destroying their livelihoods and eroding their resilience.

**The term “protracted displacement” refers to IDPs who are prevented from taking or are unable to take steps for significant periods of time to progressively reduce their vulnerability, impoverishment and**

**marginalization and find a durable solution.** With durable solutions out of reach and facing barriers to leading self-sufficient lives, they are “left behind” despite the promises of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**The major causes of protracted internal displacement, while highly contextual, include prolonged conflict; lack of political will and inadequate frameworks at the country level to address such displacement; limited engagement by international actors to move beyond the provision of humanitarian assistance; and lack of dedicated financial resources aimed at addressing protracted displacement or preventing new displacement from becoming protracted.** Somalia, where the number of IDPs approaches some 1.5 million people or 9 per cent of the country’s population, causes of protracted displacement include decades of conflict, the weakened role of state and local governments in providing infrastructure and delivering basic services, constant threats of eviction from areas of settlement and insufficient land for permanent relocation.

**Protracted internal displacement not only impacts IDPs; it can also severely affect host communities and local governments.** The majority of IDPs stay with host families or settle in urban or peri-urban communities, placing social and financial burdens on host communities and local authorities that can undermine their own resilience over time. In DRC, about 80 per cent of the estimated 2.2 million IDPs live with host families who face economic hardship and cramped living conditions to accommodate them. In addition to straining local services and government capacity, protracted internal displacement may also adversely impact a country’s ability to achieve its overall development goals. Depending on the context, it may also become a source of conflict or political instability.

**Addressing protracted internal displacement is not a purely humanitarian concern. The traditional approach—prioritizing responses that meet short-term humanitarian needs, such as immediate food**

i. The country case studies each represent a distinct context with specific challenges and were not selected for the purpose of conducting a comparative analysis. Collectively, the case studies contribute to a fuller understanding of how protracted internal displacement can be identified and addressed in a variety of contexts, including countries with varying levels of development as well as conflict and disaster situations.

**aid, hygiene and shelter—has largely failed to achieve durable solutions for the ever-growing number of IDPs worldwide.** This increasing trend of protracted displacement calls for moving beyond care and maintenance to rebuilding lives, with humanitarian, development and, depending on the context, human rights, peace and security, and disaster risk reduction actors at all levels each having a distinct and essential role to play.

**This requires far-reaching changes in how Governments and the international community address internal displacement today.** In May 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit, the heads of key UN development and humanitarian agencies, as well as the World Bank, made a strong commitment in line with the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity to implement a "New Way of Working", i.e., adopt a context-specific approach of working towards collective outcomes over multiple years, based on the respective comparative advantages of a diverse set of actors.

**In the context of protracted displacement, collective outcomes can be understood as commonly agreed results or impacts that reduce the particular needs, risks and vulnerabilities of IDPs and increase their resilience through targets that are strategic, clear, quantifiable and measurable, and which are achieved through the combined efforts** of Governments at national, subnational and local levels, international humanitarian and development actors, IDPs, local communities, civil society and the private sector. The most sustainable results are achieved when Governments lead or co-lead with others, given their primary responsibility for IDPs, but different configurations may be required depending on the contexts. Among the countries of focus for this study, the Government of Colombia's goal enshrined in its National Development Plan to move 500,000 IDPs out of vulnerability by 2018 is a promising example that may provide a model for other displacement-affected countries.

**This approach implicitly recognizes that IDPs should not have to wait until a conflict is fully resolved or all impacts of a disaster have ceased before they can begin rebuilding their lives and move towards self-sufficiency in accordance with the fundamental standards of human rights and dignity.** For example, if IDPs find themselves in a safe part of the country, those who do not want to

return to their place of origin should be supported to find durable solutions through locally integration or permanent settlement elsewhere in the country. For other IDPs wishing to return at a later stage, steps can be taken in their current location to help them move toward achieving self-sufficiency and improving their living conditions pending ultimately finding durable solutions. Finally, even when IDPs live in areas with ongoing conflict or recurrent disasters and remain in need of continuing humanitarian assistance, measures can still be taken to reduce IDPs' vulnerability and impoverishment by removing obstacles that hinder IDPs' efforts to strengthen their resilience.

#### **Achieving collective outcomes in relation to protracted internal displacement requires seven elements:**

- 1. Creating the evidence base:** Identifying the impacts of protracted internal displacement with respect to humanitarian, development, human rights, peace and security, and disaster risk reduction action, and identifying the underlying causes for displacement becoming protracted. Evidence should also help assess the capacities that IDPs and host communities possess to address and solve protracted displacement.
- 2. Defining collective outcomes:** Agreeing on strategic, clear, quantifiable, measurable and achievable results.
- 3. Ensuring a strategic outlook by formulating a common problem statement:** Reaching a common understanding of the underlying causes of the protractedness of each specific internal displacement situation and ensuing risks and obstacles, and developing strategies to address protracted displacement, as informed by this analysis.
- 4. Integrating collective outcomes into relevant planning tools:** Using National Development Plans, as well as subnational and local development plans or other relevant plans, complemented by UN planning tools, such as UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), to provide a sound basis for planning collective outcomes.
- 5. Promoting and creating normative and institutional frameworks conducive to achieving collective outcomes:** Ensuring that Governments have adequate

laws and policies as well as the institutional capacity to address protracted internal displacement or prevent recent displacement from becoming protracted, covering the full range of relevant ministries and authorities.

- 6. Implementing outcome-oriented programmes and projects:** Moving from mandate-driven isolated projects to multi-year collaborative interventions that effectively address protracted displacement or prevent recent displacement from becoming protracted.
- 7. Securing transversal financing:** Ensuring that adequate financial resources are allocated in ways that transcend the humanitarian-development divide to bolster rather than undermine collective outcomes.

Provided collective outcomes are in line with international human rights guarantees and compatible with relevant standards, notably the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions, **the involvement of humanitarian actors in their attainment would in most cases not compromise the humanitarian principles** of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

**Through this new approach, millions of IDPs and host communities could secure better access to livelihood opportunities, adequate housing with security of tenure and basic services.** This approach would represent an important step towards the target of significantly reducing protracted internal displacement in a safe and dignified manner by 2030. IDPs would be better positioned to reduce aid dependency, move out of extreme poverty, become self-reliant and contribute to development. Governments would make improved progress towards achieving the SDGs. Local actors' capacities and IDPs' voices in community-based decision-making processes would be strengthened. Investing in collective outcomes over multi-year time frames would allow donors and humanitarian organizations to spend fewer resources on simply managing "caseloads" and reduce costs over time; saved funding could be reallocated to other emergencies.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations address key areas where Governments, humanitarian and development organizations, international financial institutions and donors should consider potential and context-specific policy, and institutional and operational changes to achieve collective outcomes for people living in protracted internal displacement.

**Governments should lead efforts, wherever possible, to achieve collective outcomes that address protracted displacement and prevent new displacement from becoming protracted.** Governments should undertake, as a matter of priority, and as an important step towards achieving the SDGs, concerted efforts to reverse the trend of increased protracted internal displacement and substantially reduce the number of people living in such displacement. They should prioritize action ensuring IDPs' and host communities' access to **livelihood opportunities, adequate housing with security of tenure and basic services** using, where appropriate, area-based approaches.

Governments should define, integrate and prioritize collective outcomes **that address** protracted internal displacement within **National Development Plans** and other relevant plans, as well as **adopt adequate normative and institutional frameworks** on internal displacement. Supported by international actors, Governments should work to ensure that **municipalities have adequate capacity** to address protracted internal displacement, including resources allocated on the basis of the total population, inclusive of IDPs.

**International humanitarian and development organizations should support governmental efforts to address protracted internal displacement by integrating concrete and measurable collective outcomes into their own planning and activities.** In the absence of State-led initiatives to address protracted internal displacement or prevent recent displacement from becoming protracted, collective outcomes may be agreed within the UN system, albeit necessarily including consultation with relevant authorities and the displacement-affected communities themselves. International humanitarian and development organizations should, based on joint analysis and in consultation with IDPs and host communities, **prioritize**

**action that strengthens the resilience of IDPs and host communities, particularly by investing in livelihoods, adequate and stable housing and access to basic services.** They should also endeavour to **strengthen Government capacity at all levels.** In urban areas, where currently about half of IDPs can be found, comprehensive urban planning approaches should be promoted and supported. The role of the Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue to foster collective outcomes should be clarified and strengthened. **UN planning instruments, such as UNDAFs and HRPs, and National Development Plans, should either be aligned with or complementary to each other** and outline the contribution of various actors to achieving collective outcomes on protracted internal displacement.

**Bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as international financial institutions, should direct multi-year, flexible funding towards collective outcomes** that reverse the trend of protracted displacement by targeting the causes of protracted displacement, not just its impacts. They should also insist that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms measure the achievement of collective outcomes. Donors should provide **more flexible and long-term funding, reduce or only use “soft” earmarking,** and allow a proportion of humanitarian and development **funding to go directly to national authorities.** Donors should allocate development funding to country-level Multi-Partner Trust Funds that have a broad programmatic scope that includes addressing protracted internal displacement. Governments should consider the use of **loans and other financial instruments, in addition to grants, to implement measures to address protracted internal displacement** or prevent recent displacement from becoming protracted.

## Next steps

To ensure that concrete action follows this report, it is recommended that the UN prioritizes the following action.

RCs/HCs and UN Country Teams, with support from UNDP and OCHA, and in collaboration with relevant governmental entities, should undertake **concrete action on the basis of identified collective outcomes that will reduce the needs, risks and vulnerabilities of IDPs in protracted**

**displacement in three to five selected countries,** supported by multilateral as well as bilateral donors.

In order to support UN Country Teams and IASC/ Humanitarian Country Teams, UNDP and OCHA should develop clear guidance on how to use **existing planning tools** that sets out the specific, measurable and necessary steps to reach agreed collective outcomes on protracted internal displacement, and examine **whether new joint planning tools** are needed. UNDP and OCHA should also create **monitoring and evaluation systems** that focus on impacts and outcomes towards meeting collective outcomes, and allow for the adjustment of programmes to improve effectiveness and respond to unforeseen circumstances. The UN should integrate the New Way of Working within decision No. 2011/20 of the **UN Secretary-General on Durable Solutions.**

Finally, in order to ensure strong overall leadership, a **system-wide internal displacement initiative** should be initiated by the UN Secretary-General and his Deputy to implement the diverse set of actions listed above. In addition, the initiative should include a review of the role of and the contributions to be made by the **UN’s peace and security actors** towards meeting collective outcomes on protracted internal displacement and **engaging with UN donor groups** to find ways to ensure the provision of more flexible, predictable and sustainable financing to achieve collective outcomes on protracted internal displacement. Furthermore, organizing a **high-level event** convened by the Secretary-General on the new outcome-oriented approach to protracted internal displacement in 2018 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement could be considered. This event could provide a platform for promoting UN institutional and operational changes to enhance system-wide responses to protracted internal displacement and secure commitments from Governments, organizations, donors, civil society and the private sector.