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**The engagement of UNHCR with internally  
displaced persons**

*Summary*

This paper provides an update on the latest developments in the engagement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons, including operational aspects and coordination leadership. The paper further highlights the progress UNHCR has made in relation to strategic partnerships and developing capacity for humanitarian coordination. It also reviews the efforts made by the organization to facilitate the transition from humanitarian response to development, related programming, and advocating the centrality of protection and solutions in internal displacement situations.

## **I. Introduction**

1. More than 57 million people were internally displaced as of the end of 2022, the highest number ever recorded. Eight million people were newly displaced due to large scale conflict during the year. Internally displaced persons due to conflict and violence continue to constitute the majority of the forcibly displaced in the world, a trend that has persisted for the last two decades. The internally displaced are also the largest group of displaced populations served by UNHCR. The Office works in internal displacement situations in 34 countries across all regions.

2. In 2022, almost 5.9 million internally displaced persons were reported to have returned to their places of origin worldwide.

## **II. Internal displacement: advocacy in motion**

3. Tackling the challenge of internal displacement requires reinforcing the primary responsibility of States to assist and protect those who have been displaced within their own country. This invariably includes advocating on behalf of the internally displaced, including, in some instances, with non-State actors.

4. In 2022, UNHCR released the Global Report on Law and Policy on Internal Displacement: Implementing National Responsibility.<sup>1</sup> This flagship report analyses key benchmarks of national responsibility, such as the presence of effective national legislation, as well as global and regional trends. It also looks at learning opportunities related to developing national instruments to protect internally displaced persons and support durable solutions for them. UNHCR supported the work of the internally displaced persons protection expert group, a senior-level contact team that held consultations with national leadership on strategic planning to strengthen protection responses, including through missions conducted to Honduras and South Sudan.

5. Protection analysis is a key advocacy tool for UNHCR. During the year, protection analysis prepared by UNHCR-led global protection cluster was shared with affected States, United Nations Resident Coordinators and country teams, as well as with internally displaced persons to ensure that protection is placed at the centre of the stakeholder response.

6. Further to the decision of several States to advance new legislation and policies for internally displaced persons in 2022, UNHCR reiterated its readiness to offer additional assistance and expertise, as needed, to support governments to better protect internally displaced persons and help identify durable solutions for them. Some of these include Honduras, Mexico, Nigeria, Mozambique and the Philippines.

## **III. Including internal displacement solutions in early humanitarian response**

7. The UNHCR policy on emergency preparedness and response, published in January 2023, anchors 'durable solutions from the start' as a key principle, drawing attention to the need to include the pursuit of durable solutions in all emergency preparedness and response activities from the onset. Internal displacement emergencies tend to be fluid in nature, with new displacements occurring at the same time as internally displaced persons might decide to return or pursue other solutions.

In practice, UNHCR approaches which pursue durable solutions from the onset include:

- Programmatic interventions that enable decision-making by communities, and catalyse and facilitate durable solutions for internally displaced persons already as part of an emergency response; as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/publications/810/reports/report/global-report-law-and-policy-internal-displacement-implementing>.

- Leveraging the cluster coordination roles of UNHCR to instil the durable-solutions lens early on across other sectors and the humanitarian country team for a humanitarian system-wide approach, and to involve development and peace actors from the onset to identify early opportunities for joint action.

8. For UNHCR, durable solutions from the start means investing in people and their own capabilities to mitigate dependency risks. Current emergency preparedness and response activities include intention surveys and the mapping of return areas, counselling, as well as cash or in-kind support to enable durable solution decisions and economic empowerment. They also provide for community-based support that considers relations with non-displaced communities to help foster social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.

9. UNHCR undertook interventions to promote solutions from the onset of internal displacement in several countries, such as Ethiopia and Ukraine, by engaging with authorities and communities to enable informed choices on solutions and including solution-oriented programming in cluster coordination and other relevant processes. In Cameroon, UNHCR supported the Government in including internally displaced persons in the upcoming population census.

#### **IV. Accompanying the transition from humanitarian response to development**

10. With the transition from humanitarian response to development underway in several countries in 2022, UNHCR adapted its engagement with the humanitarian, peace and development nexus accordingly.

11. In Iraq, UNHCR commenced the transition from emergency response to a longer-term development approach in anticipation of the deactivation of the cluster system and the discontinuation of the humanitarian response plan. This was in line with the humanitarian country team's decision to phase out the humanitarian response for internally displaced persons and to focus on durable solutions. UNHCR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will co-lead the newly formed protection platform, which informs partners and provides them with strategic guidance and technical support in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

12. In the Philippines, UNHCR continued its support to the development of draft legislation on the rights of internally displaced persons at both the national level and in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Both bills are expected to pass in 2023. In the context of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, UNHCR, together with the United Nations Country Team and civil society partners, collaborated with the Resident Coordinator to provide technical and capacity building support to national and local authorities on durable solutions. Similar transition activities were underway in Libya, where UNHCR contributed to the overall efforts of the United Nations Country Team, donors and international non-governmental organisations to support durable solutions for internally displaced persons in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework.

#### **V. Partnerships**

13. UNHCR contributes to a multi-stakeholder, whole-of-society approach to internal displacement through wide ranging and inclusive partnerships with local and national authorities; local civil society, community-based organizations, local women's organizations, and faith-based groups; United Nations entities, including political and peacekeeping missions; regional and international organizations; development actors and financial institutions; the private sector; internally displaced people and displacement-affected communities.

14. Advances were made in the collaboration with United Nations partners to bring their comparative advantages to areas in which working together can deliver better results in responding to current and future crises and challenges. Through a global memorandum of

understanding UNHCR and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat),<sup>2</sup> are endeavouring to deepen their collaboration in key areas of operational response and programming; integrated policy support and capacity development; and knowledge, data, advocacy, and outreach – covering themes ranging from integrated settlements-based approaches to housing, land and property rights. A comprehensive module on access to land and property has been created under the UNHCR forced displacement survey.

15. The Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions 2023-2025 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNHCR<sup>3</sup> builds on collaboration with a focus on those key areas in which UNDP has a strong comparative advantage to contribute with development financing, technical assistance and advocacy to situations of forced displacement. The framework aligns the work of the two agencies to deliver on the humanitarian development-peace nexus, providing solutions for the displaced and stateless populations, as well as support for host communities and governments.

16. In June 2022, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) established the IOM/UNHCR Framework of Engagement,<sup>4</sup> to strengthen collaboration in situations of (i) mixed movements involving migrants and refugees; (ii) durable solutions for internally displaced persons; and (iii) to strengthen the capacity of national authorities to gather data in situations of internal displacement. It builds on the increasing collaboration between the two entities globally.

17. In February 2023, UNHCR and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) signed the Strategic Collaboration Framework,<sup>5</sup> which set out a joint ambition to promote the inclusion of displaced children and their families into national plans, budgets, datasets and service delivery systems. The UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center enhanced the collection, analysis and sharing of socioeconomic data on forced displacement in line with international standards. UNHCR also worked with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on joint macroeconomic engagement in the response to internal displacement.

18. An important step was the creation and launch of a community-based advisory board<sup>6</sup> in December 2022 to enhance engagement and partnership with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons and to advise UNHCR at the global level, based on their experiences and expertise. UNHCR also strengthened its engagement with Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) processes and contributed to the terms of reference of the IASC independent review of humanitarian responses to internal displacement.

## **VI. Humanitarian coordination**

19. The global protection cluster strengthens coordination capacities at the country level and supports timely and evidence-based protection analysis to reinforce decision-making and galvanize protection efforts. In 2022, the global protection cluster launched a campaign, “Access that protects” resulting in the publication of an agenda for change in collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which reflects learning on humanitarian access and protection. The cluster produced regular field and global analysis to back evidence-based action to address and mitigate protection risks. UNHCR leads 29 out of 32 protection clusters and cluster-like mechanisms, advocating the rights of 113 million people in need of protection.

20. During the year, the global shelter cluster mobilized efforts towards greener and climate-smart humanitarian shelter and settlement responses. The cluster published “Pathways Home – Guidance for Supporting Self Recovery” to explore the concept of supporting shelter self-recovery and provide practical guidance on how to accompany the

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<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://unhabitat.org/guidance-for-responding-to-displacement-in-urban-areas>.

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://www.undp.org/publications/global-collaboration-framework-inclusion-and-solutions-2023-2025>.

<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/6311ce0c4.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/unicef-unhcr-strategic-collaboration-framework>.

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcrs-task-team-engagement-and-partnership-organizations-led-displaced-and-stateless-persons>.

process in post-disaster and post-conflict contexts. The 2018-2022 cluster strategy and information management processes were revised in 2022, resulting in updated strategic priorities and strengthened staffing capacity. Regional shelter forums were organized in Africa and Asia to assist national actors with locally defined approaches. UNHCR leads 20 out of 32 shelter clusters and cluster-like mechanisms.

21. The focus of the global camp coordination and camp management cluster in 2022 centred on building capacity of humanitarian actors and national authorities, promoting localization, solutions, climate action, protection mainstreaming and inclusion. Establishing direct communication with internally displaced persons and their communities was the main approach adopted by the cluster to enhance accountability to the affected population. Developing the capacity of humanitarian actors and authorities to deliver on these priorities continued throughout the year. In partnership with the humanitarian advisory group, a round of multi-stakeholder consultations was initiated on advancing localization as part of the cluster's portfolio. UNHCR leads or co-leads 19 out of 22 active camp coordination and camp management clusters and cluster-like mechanisms.

## **VII. UNHCR engagement with the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement**

22. UNHCR contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, which sets out steps to better resolve, prevent, and address internal displacement crises. Support is provided to the Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, in the form of the secondment of two staff members to the Special Adviser's Office in 2022 and through direct support, advice as requested by the Special Adviser. In addition, UNHCR has developed an institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement<sup>7</sup> in close coordination with the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement. Through this Plan, UNHCR endeavours to demonstrate institutional efforts towards its longstanding commitment and engagement in situations of internal displacement.

23. The ongoing transformation of UNHCR has strengthened the organization's engagement in situations of internal displacement by moving decision-making closer to the field. The UNHCR Principal Adviser on Internal Displacement continues to promote, catalyse and coordinate all aspects of an expanded UNHCR engagement in situations of internal displacement, with substantive delivery by thematic, institutional and operational leads at headquarters, the regional bureaux and country offices. The Principal IDP Advisor was also assigned to advise the Resident Coordinator and United Nations Country Team in Afghanistan in October 2022, leading to the development of a solutions framework. Similar effort is underway in Yemen. An internal boost fund was concluded in 2022 under the UNHCR initiative on internal displacement. It provided \$60 million over three years (2020-2022) to strengthen UNHCR country level programming for innovative coordination and solutions for internally displaced persons. Strategic oversight of operational implementation and coordination commitments is now directly provided by the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations and the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, to ensure the requisite level of consideration for internal displacement matters within organizational processes.

## **VIII. Reporting**

24. Concerted efforts have been made to highlight the organizational commitment of UNHCR to the implementation of the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The High Commissioner stressed the organization's commitment towards solutions for internally displaced persons in his statements to the Third Committee of the General Assembly in November 2022 and to the seventy-third session of the UNHCR Executive Committee in October 2022. The annual General Assembly Resolution on the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, or Omnibus resolution (A/RES/77/198) encourages UNHCR to contribute to collective efforts to advance solutions for internally

<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/media/66130>.

displaced persons. UNHCR also reports regularly on its internal displacement engagement to the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee, including in the regional updates, as well as a dedicated annual presentation on internal displacement. An overarching report on UNHCR engagement in situations of internal displacement 2019 – 2021 was released.<sup>8</sup> An independent evaluation of engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement is currently underway and will be issued by the UNHCR evaluation office.

25. In terms of programmatic design, with the launch of a new results-based management approach in 2021, UNHCR has embarked on a transformative initiative to enhance its capacity to report on results on its work in internal displacement situations. At its core is the move to multi-year planning that facilitates long-term strategic thinking and strengthens the engagement of country operations with national and United Nations inter-agency development processes, which are normally of a multi-year nature. Critically, financial tracking of expenditures on internal displacement is an embedded feature of the revised system, launched in 2022.

## **IX. Budget and expenditure**

26. A total needs-based budget for internal displacement engagement in 2022 amounting to \$1.357 billion was approved by the Executive Committee at its seventy-second session in October 2021. This amount, however, was insufficient to keep pace with emerging needs, and the budget was increased to \$2.3 billion, an increase of 64 per cent. The funding provided also did not keep pace with the growing needs, resulting in underfunding, in particular for operations in sub-Saharan Africa. Total UNHCR expenditures in internal displacement situations reached \$1.13 billion by the end of the year.

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<sup>8</sup> Available at <https://reporting.unhcr.org/internal-displacement-engagement-2019-2021>.