



INTRODUCTION

*Photo IOM/Sunil Srivastava 2006
Information session in South Darfur camp.*

Introduction to the Provisional Edition of the Handbook

In more than 50 countries around the world, some 24 million individuals are uprooted from their homes and displaced in their own country as a result of conflict or human rights violations.

Internally displaced persons, or “IDPs,” are part of the broader **civilian population** that needs protection and assistance because of conflict and human rights abuses. The focus on IDPs in this Handbook is not intended to encourage preferential treatment of IDPs to the exclusion of other populations at risk; but rather to improve the quality of the response developed for IDPs whose needs have, until recently, been inadequately addressed by the international humanitarian response.

Forced from their homes, IDPs also experience specific forms of deprivation, such as loss of shelter, and often face **heightened or particular protection risks**. These risks may include: armed attack and abuse while fleeing in search of safety; family separation, including an increase in the number of separated and unaccompanied children; heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly affecting women and children; arbitrary deprivation of land, homes and other property; and displacement into inhospitable environments, where they suffer stigmas, marginalization, discrimination or harassment.

In the face of such risks, internally displaced women, men, girls and boys have to demonstrate a remarkable degree of resilience and strength, drawing on their own capacities to develop basic support mechanisms and seek protection.

Prevention of displacement and the protection of IDPs and **other affected populations**¹ within their own country are the responsibility of **national authorities**. Particularly in situations of armed conflict, IDPs may find themselves in territories over which State authority is absent or difficult to enforce. In such situations, prevention of displacement and the protection of IDPs are also the responsibility of non-State actors.

In those situations where States require support or where national protection is not ensured, a critical protection role falls to the **international community**. It has been difficult to address this “protection gap” not only because of the sensitivity of the subject within the country concerned, but also because of various gaps within the international framework.

Concerted efforts are also being made to address **institutional gaps** in humanitarian response, including in situations of internal displacement. The reform of the humanitarian system initiated in 2005 identified protection as a persistent gap and created institutional mechanisms to ensure that protection is a core component, and cross-cutting element of humanitarian response. The key mechanism introduced to help fill the gap is known as the “cluster” approach.

Although the critical test for any humanitarian response is what happens on the ground, until now there has been no comprehensive, practical guidance on how to operationalize protection in situations of internal displacement.

¹ In the context of internal displacement, “affected populations” have been defined as: “host communities where IDPs are living; host communities in areas of IDP return; and persons or communities at risk of displacement if their protection problems are not addressed” (Progress Report of the Cluster Working Group on Protection to the IASC Principals, 12 Dec 2005). Other affected populations may also include those who are unable to flee (i.e., those trapped by the fighting, those who cannot move into the “displacement zone” due to ethnic or other tensions, or because of illness, injuries, handicaps, etc.). Throughout this Handbook, operational guidance referring to IDPs should generally be understood to include not only IDPs but also affected populations.

Goals and objectives of the Handbook

This provisional edition of the Handbook is the result of **joint efforts by the staff of over 30 international organizations, most of which are members of the Global Protection Cluster**. This includes United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations.

The handbook provides **operational guidance and tools** to support effective protection responses in situations of internal displacement.

Specifically, the Handbook seeks to:

- Ensure that staff are familiar with the core concepts, principles and international legal standards that form the framework for protection work;
- Assist staff in operationalizing these concepts, principles and legal standards and in carrying out their protection responsibilities;
- Improve understanding of the particular protection risks faced by internally displaced women, men, boys and girls of various backgrounds;
- Provide guidance on how, through a range of different activities, to prevent and respond to the protection risks faced by IDPs;
- Enhance staff skills for carrying out protection work; and
- Promote a consistent and well-coordinated protection response in different operations.

The focus of the Handbook is on the protection of IDPs and other **affected populations** in situations of internal displacement in **complex emergencies**. Much of the guidance provided may be relevant as well during natural disasters, when internal displacement and protection risks also often arise.²

Intended audience of the Provisional Edition

This Provisional Edition of the Handbook is primarily intended for use by staff, particularly field staff, of international organizations engaged in responding to internal displacement. This includes not only human rights and protection officers, but also humanitarian and development actors more broadly. Protection is a cross-cutting issue that *all* staff should address and promote.

Indeed, the Handbook should be a source of information and guidance for all partners in a protection response, including State authorities and civil society.

The **provisional edition of the Handbook will be field-tested worldwide for a period of one year, following its release in December 2007**. At the end of 2008, the final edition of the Handbook will be issued, reflecting any evolution in doctrine and practice and lessons learned from operational developments. It will also incorporate the contributions by colleagues currently working in the Field to protect and assist IDPs and other affected populations.

How to use the Handbook

The Handbook is divided into five parts. These five parts and their individual chapters are interconnected, but they can also stand alone as self-contained modules.

- Part I covers the **foundations of protection**. It sets out core concepts, approaches and humanitarian principles for protection work and provides an overview of the legal and institutional frameworks for the protection of IDPs.

² See also *Protecting Persons Affected by Natural Disasters: IASC Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters* (IASC, 2006).

- Part II outlines **skills**, both professional and interpersonal, which are required to support protection work.
- Part III focuses on **building a protection response**, providing guidance on how to assess and analyse a protection situation; develop protection strategies for response; and monitor and evaluate protection programmes.
- Part IV provides more detailed information about key **protection activities** that contribute to an effective protection response, identifying the operational challenges that may arise and the principles that should guide our action.
- Part V provides guidance on **how to prevent, mitigate and respond to specific protection risks and rights violations** commonly faced by IDPs, suggesting actions for supporting IDPs to realize their rights and for the State to fulfil its protection responsibilities.
- Part VI focuses on **durable solutions** and the importance of having a solutions-oriented approach to protection. It is largely based on the *Framework for Durable Solutions* developed by the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement with the support and guidance of Representative of the Secretary General for the Human Rights of IDPs. Part VI provides practical suggestions for the application of this Framework in Field Operations.

The Handbook builds on a growing body of information on internal displacement and on existing tools and guidance materials on protection. It refers to other relevant resources for additional information in greater depth.

This Handbook also includes a list of abbreviations, and two annexes:

- Annex 1: The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
- Annex 2: When Displacement Ends: A Framework for Durable Solutions

Feedback on this Handbook and examples of field practices on protection are welcome at any time. Email us at: HQIDPHB@unhcr.org