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**UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced  
persons***Summary*

This paper provides an update on UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement. Substantive changes have been made possible with the roll-out of the revised "[Policy on UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement](#)" (IDP policy), which was released in September 2019. The paper includes updates on the coordination and operationalization of UNHCR's response in a dynamic global context and presents some of the ways in which the organization's engagement in internal displacement settings has been strengthened to date. It further provides a forward-looking organizational vision for an expanded engagement in the protection and identification of solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), in partnership with humanitarian, peace and development stakeholders.

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## I. Introduction

1. At the end of 2020, more than 48 million people had been internally displaced due to conflict and violence, nearly half under the age of 18. Several countries faced multiple internal displacement situations, including some in which refugees were among those who were newly displaced.

## II. UNHCR and internal displacement today

2. During the sixty-seventh plenary session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in October 2016, the High Commissioner committed UNHCR to working more systematically across the entire spectrum of displacement, including through more decisive and predictable engagement with IDPs.

3. A number of changes within the organization have been implemented since that session: in addition to the revised IDP policy from September 2019, an initiative on internal displacement was launched in March 2020 to support UNHCR operations in implementing the policy commitments. Through this initiative, focused support has been provided to IDP operations on thematic, strategic and operational issues. Efforts have also been made to align resource mobilization strategies and resource allocation, and to increase visibility and advocacy on the impact of internal displacement on affected populations. Examples of good practice have also been shared among operations.

## III. Strengthened UNHCR engagement in internal displacement settings

### A. Emergency preparedness and response

4. Effective emergency response starts with better preparedness and early engagement in new and evolving internal displacement situations. This allows UNHCR to assume a leadership role when clusters are activated in order to contribute to launching an effective operational response without delay.

5. At the end of 2019, UNHCR finalized a new emergency preparedness tool for IDP situations. The "[Preparedness package for IDP emergencies](#)" provides specific guidance to country representatives on how to prepare for new internal displacement, in particular with regard to cluster coordination and operational delivery. It includes instructions on applying the preparedness cycle approach, which consists of risk analysis; implementation of minimum and advanced preparedness actions, including a scenario-based contingency plan when appropriate.

6. Efforts have also been undertaken to expand UNHCR's standing capacity to deploy personnel with coordination, information management and technical expertise. In this context, a roster of personnel with inter-agency coordination capacity has been created, with 25 members available for immediate deployment for up to one year, including eight at senior level. A roster for emergency information management has also been established.

### B. Coordination

7. Within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), UNHCR leads the global protection cluster (GPC) and co-leads the global shelter cluster with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the global camp coordination and camp management cluster (CCCM) with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Office is also active in other global clusters.

8. The oversight of cluster implementation is now directly provided by the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations and the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, in an effort to strengthen the strategic impact of UNHCR's leadership in the clusters.

9. In 2020, the global CCCM cluster supported 23 country-level clusters and cluster-like structures. In September, UNHCR undertook an internal “deep dive” to examine its CCCM engagement, resulting in an internal roadmap to enhance its contribution, in line with the global CCCM strategy. UNHCR’s CCCM cluster team supported 10 country-level clusters and nine cluster-like structures in 2020.

10. UNHCR led 16 out of 30 country-level shelter clusters and 19 out of 37 shelter coordination mechanisms, providing shelter and core relief items to over 12 million IDPs, in collaboration with more than 530 partners. This represents over 81 per cent of all displaced people globally who have been assisted with shelter. In the context of the outbreak of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), some 2.2 million people were supported to address needs related to medical, quarantine and isolation facilities or to reduce overcrowding.

11. The GPC, which is a network of over 1,000 protection actors in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, continued to deliver life-saving services, helping IDPs access their rights and find safety from violence, abuse and exploitation. UNHCR led 29 out of 32 activated country-level protection clusters/sectors, including 16 that were co-facilitated with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Additional information about the work of the GPC is available in the note on international protection (EC/72/SC/CRP.10).

12. UNHCR continued to support the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, as well as the Humanitarian Country Teams. The Office provided protection analysis in displacement settings and contributed to strategy development as part of a system-wide commitment to ensure that protection drives humanitarian action. Moreover, efforts were continued to further systematize this process, where possible.

### C. Inter-agency impact

13. UNHCR’s engagement in situations of internal displacement is grounded in the “[Guiding principles on internal displacement](#)” and the “[IASC Guidance on internal displacement](#)”, enabling the Office to contribute to collective outcomes for the protection of and finding solutions for IDPs and displacement-affected communities. UNHCR’s contribution to various IASC bodies and its co-leadership of the IASC results group 2 on accountability and inclusion helps to ensure that protection remains central to the work of IASC.

14. The Office remains committed to the IASC reforms aimed at achieving greater coherence and impact. It continues to engage in the rationalized structures, such as the Emergency Directors Group and IASC Working Group and support the newly established Deputies Forum. In a recent development, UNHCR successfully proposed to elevate protection matters across all IASC structures in 2021 and beyond.

15. UNHCR co-chairs the subgroup on localization, which developed draft guidance on the meaningful participation of national NGOs and community-based organizations. Additionally, the Office and IFRC signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at building the local capacity and enhancing collaboration in emergency response, preparedness, and resilience-building.

16. UNHCR continued to build strategic partnerships for the protection of IDPs, including through the “[Plan of action for advancing prevention, protection and solutions for internally displaced people 2018-2020](#)”, which was launched during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Guiding principles on internal displacement (GP20). The Office contributed to the GP20 report “[Working together better to prevent, address and find durable solutions to internal displacement: GP20 compilation of national practices](#)” which showcased over 20 promising practices. The GP20 also provided recommendations to the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.

17. Moreover, following regional exchanges in 2020 with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), UNHCR spearheaded exchanges in the Middle East, the Americas and Asia in collaboration with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Platform on Disaster

Displacement. In 2021, the Office facilitated national, regional and global consultations to foster good practices and galvanize collective action and support for countries affected by displacement.

#### **D. Strengthening support for solutions for internally displaced persons**

18. UNHCR promotes solutions for IDPs from the outset of its engagement with them, while also ensuring their inclusion in local and national systems and services, as well as their access to economic opportunities. In parallel, the Office pursues early engagement with development and financial institutions to mitigate the risk of protracted displacement.

19. In 2020, UNHCR was invited to contribute to a peer-review on the World Bank's "[Development approach to conflict-induced internal displacement](#)". The paper, which was published in January 2021, explains the rationale for further integration of conflict-induced IDPs into the programmes of the World Bank and supports the operationalization of the World Bank's new strategy for tackling fragility, conflict and violence. UNHCR will continue to work closely with the World Bank in this context.

20. At the strategic level, UNHCR helped to promote a number of strategies and initiatives, including: "[The national durable solutions strategy 2020-2024](#)" of the Federal Government of Somalia and UNHCR's interim livelihoods strategy for 2021-2022 in Somalia; and the Solutions Initiative for the Displacement Situation in the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan under the auspices of IGAD. UNHCR also supported the formation of the Core Group of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) Support Platform to build momentum in 2021 towards mobilizing new partnerships.

21. Efforts to promote the self-reliance of IDPs and their access to livelihood opportunities were prioritized. UNHCR supported skills-building activities, the provision of start-up grants for new businesses and the reconstruction of infrastructure in Colombia, the Philippines and South Sudan.

22. The use of cash assistance was expanded to enhance solutions and improve socioeconomic conditions, including through greater financial inclusion, access to national services and livelihoods opportunities, and increased social cohesion. UNHCR provided \$700 million in cash assistance to persons of concern in 2020, including IDPs in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras, Iraq, Libya, the Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen.

#### **E. Programming for internally displaced persons**

23. UNHCR provides widespread assistance and relief to IDPs and affected communities directly and in collaboration with partners. Operations employ an "area-based approach" in situations that involve IDPs, refugees, returnees and affected communities, for example in Afghanistan, Colombia and Iraq. Experiences from these operations are currently being consolidated to help advance solutions in the regional contexts.

24. In 2020, UNHCR's results-based management (RBM) system underwent a significant transformation to enable smarter, more integrated and equitable programming. The new RBM approach further facilitates the area-based programming by focusing on impact and outcomes and by placing less emphasis on status-based assistance. Results and indicators will be linked to the population types that UNHCR serves and this will allow UNHCR to monitor the results achieved for IDPs as well as other groups, and promote equitable outcomes. In addition, identified risks are linked directly to the specific outcomes related to the population type in order to strengthen risk management. In this context, risks associated with IDP situations have been integrated into UNHCR's risk management tools.

25. Internal planning instructions for 2021 required operations to ensure predictable programmes for the benefit of IDPs. To improve the capacity of the workforce in this respect, an e-learning module on UNHCR's work in internal displacement situations will be rolled out for managers in the second half of 2021, to complement existing learning programmes.

## F. Data and information management

26. With the revised IDP policy, UNHCR committed to ensuring that a robust protection analysis is conducted across the spectrum of internal displacement, in partnership with relevant stakeholders. This requires collecting accurate, comprehensive and quality data for evidence-based advocacy, programming, monitoring and assistance by UNHCR and other stakeholders, which ultimately contributes to better protection and solutions outcomes.

27. The newly established data, identity management and analysis units in regional bureaux contribute to improving IDP-related data, providing guidance to UNHCR teams as well as assessing information needs, organizing data collection and conducting analysis. The Office contributes to IDP-related data collection and analysis efforts, including through collaborating with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the Joint IDP Profiling Service and IOM, and by co-leading the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS).

28. To further support operational engagement and cluster responsibilities, UNHCR is optimizing its standard information products, including protection and other monitoring reports, needs analyses, technical assessments and service and presence mapping. Following this process, the information products will be shared regularly in accordance with responsible data approaches, including through UNHCR and inter-agency web-based platforms and portals. A revision of all external country-level data portals is also underway aimed at ensuring the timely provision of statistics and analysis of internal displacement situations.

29. Together with the Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR is spearheading Project 21 - a harmonized and regionwide protection monitoring system in several Sahel countries. It aims to promote an evidence-based understanding of the protection environment, risks and needs, allowing stakeholders to align interventions, conduct regional advocacy and better coordinate protection activities. The project is under implementation in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, with plans to expand.

30. Moreover, the work of the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement enhances the ability of stakeholders to make timely and evidence-based decisions to improve the lives of people impacted by forced displacement, including IDPs. With a focus on socioeconomic data, the Joint Data Center also works with the EGRIS to implement and refine the "[International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics](#)". With support from the Joint Data Center, the national statistical office of the Central African Republic will expand its 2020 national household survey to include IDPs. Furthermore, a rapid monitoring system is being established in Somalia to collect high-frequency data on IDPs and host communities with a view to informing actions in support of solutions.

## IV. Future outlook for expanded UNHCR engagement with internally displaced persons

### The High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

31. UNHCR is committed to promoting positive outcomes for IDP solutions through the work of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. In this context, the Office made four official submissions, which included: "[Overview for IDP Inclusion and coverage across the IDP spectrum](#)"; "[Unlocking Solutions for the Internally Displaced](#)"; "[A Review of Innovative Financing Mechanisms for Internally Displaced Persons](#)"; and, "[Private Sector Engagement for Internally Displaced Persons](#)". Furthermore, UNHCR facilitated multiple consultations with IDPs that subsequently contributed to thematic and focused discussions and events held by the High-Level Panel. In addition, a side event on IDP solutions, which was held at the seventy-first session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme in October 2020, provided an analysis of activities underway in this regard. UNHCR will actively follow-up on the recommendations of the High-Level Panel in

collaboration with relevant stakeholders, in particular States affected by internal displacement.

## **V. Conclusion**

32. The changes resulting from the implementation of the revised IDP policy extend across all aspects of UNHCR's organizational response. The achievements made thus far require further consolidation and additional resources to be scaled up. UNHCR will share further information regarding the impact of the revised IDP policy, including a supplementary analytical report with more details on the implementation process guided by a standard policy monitoring framework.

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