

Reference Paper for the 70th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention

On this side of the border

The global challenge of internal displacement: scale, impacts and solutions

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Abstract:

Although there are currently 26 million refugees worldwide, this represents only a portion of the world's forcibly displaced. At the end of 2019, 50.8 million people were living in internal displacement because of conflict, violence and disasters. This background paper examines the global scale of the phenomenon and the international attention it has been lacking over the past decades. It further unpacks the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movements, provides insight into the socioeconomic impacts of internal displacement, and outlines promising developments that can serve as lessons learned for other countries and contexts.

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The invisible majority

For the first time, this edition of what was formerly known as the *State of the World's Refugees* has been renamed the *People Forced to Flee: History, Change and Challenge*. This shift in terminology is warranted. Although there are currently 26 million refugees worldwide, this represents the smaller portion of the world's forcibly displaced.¹ At the end of 2019, 50.8 million people were living in internal displacement because of conflict, violence and disasters.² New displacements were recorded across 145 countries and territories in 2019, making internal displacement a truly global phenomenon. India recorded the highest number of new disaster displacements, with eight tropical storms contributing to over 5 million new displacements; conflict displacement was highest in Syria, where military offensives in the north-east and north-west of the country triggered 1.8 million new displacements.³

Assisting and supporting internally displaced people (IDPs) is first and foremost the responsibility of their own government. While some countries have developed comprehensive responses to internal displacement, others lack the capacity or political will to do so. An assessment of 46 countries affected by conflict and disaster displacement showed that only 14 of them had adopted national policies considering both types of displacement, including preventive measures and provisions to end existing displacement as well as efforts to limit its negative consequences on IDPs and other affected people, such as host communities.⁴ The remaining countries either had no policy on internal displacement, or policies that were less comprehensive.

With so many national governments unable or unwilling to support IDPs, assistance from the international community is needed. Currently, despite the numbers, IDPs are the invisible majority of the world's displaced people. Because they do not cross international borders, the attention they receive pales in comparison to the interest evoked by refugee crises. Between 2015 and 2019, the New York Times published 5,204 articles containing the word "refugee", but only 136 featuring the terms "internally displaced".⁵ For IDPs, this lack of attention translates into a lack of assistance. Funding requirements of the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plans for Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the countries which experienced the highest numbers of new internal displacements due to conflict and violence in 2019, were respectively 57 per cent and 74.4 per cent unmet as of February 2021.⁶

There are good reasons for the international community to dedicate more resources to preventing and resolving internal displacement. Beyond the human cost of internal displacement, its global financial cost may already exceed \$20 billion per year.⁷ Internal displacement is also an important cause of cross-border movements: research conducted by IDMC has found that many IDPs who are unable to achieve

¹ "Figures at a glance", UNHCR, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

² IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

³ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

⁴ Countries with relevant national policies include Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Niger, Peru, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda, the Ukraine and Yemen. See IDMC, "Internal Displacement Index 2020 report", September 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/internal-displacement-index-2020-report>

⁵ "Search", The New York Times, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/search>

⁶ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>; "Syria Humanitarian Response Plan 2020", Financial Tracking Service, UNOCHA, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/924/summary>; "Democratic Republic of the Congo 2020", Financial Tracking Service, UNOCHA, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/919/summary>

⁷ IDMC, *Unveiling the Cost of Internal Displacement 2020 report*, January 2021, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/unveiling-the-cost-of-internal-displacement-0>

durable solutions in their country of origin are forced to seek refuge abroad.⁸ Protecting people inside their own countries is therefore key to preventing refugee flows.⁹

In order to galvanise the international community to prevent and resolve internal displacement, this background paper examines the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movements, provides insight into the socioeconomic impacts of internal displacement, and outlines promising developments that can serve as lessons learned for other countries and contexts.

A history of (limited) international attention

As a matter of international law, primary responsibility for the protection of IDPs remains with the country of origin. Although IDPs cannot benefit from the established refugee protection regime triggered by the crossing of internationally recognised state borders, international instruments do in theory provide them with substantial protection. The large body of Human Rights Law includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and a number of other documents, all of which are applicable to situations of internal displacement. Humanitarian law, laid out in the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two additional protocols of 1977, offers comprehensive protection for civilians, and prohibits transfers or displacements of population.

In order to clarify how existing international legal norms apply to the protection of IDPs, in 1998 the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were formulated.¹⁰ The protection norms laid out in the Guiding Principles cater for all stages of displacement, providing protection from displacement, but also during and after displacement.¹¹ While the Guiding Principles are not binding per se, they are consistent with and reflect international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as refugee law by analogy.

The Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons, adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in 2006, was the first to establish a legal framework for the protection of IDPs by incorporating the Guiding Principles into national law.¹² This was followed in 2009 by the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, which entered into force in 2012.¹³ Known as the Kampala convention, this was the first legally binding regional instrument to impose on states the obligation to protect and assist IDPs, representing a substantial step forward for the international protection of IDPs. To mark the tenth anniversary of the convention, the African Union (AU) declared 2019 the year of refugees, returnees and IDPs. Thirty-one countries have now ratified the convention, but more efforts are needed to

⁸ IDMC, *The displacement continuum: the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movement in seven countries*, June 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/the-displacement-continuum-the-relationship-between-internal-displacement-and-cross>

⁹ Roberta Cohen, *Reconciling R2P with IDP protection*, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0325_internal_displacement_cohen.pdf

¹⁰ Guy Goodwin-Gill and Jane McAdam, *The Refugee in International Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 483-484

¹¹ United Nations, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (1998)

¹² Walter Kälin, "The Great Lakes Protocol on Internally Displaced Persons: Responses and Challenges", Brookings, September 2007, <https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/the-great-lakes-protocol-on-internally-displaced-persons-responses-and-challenges/>

¹³ African Union, *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa* (2009)

implement it.¹⁴ Niger became the first country to domesticate the Kampala convention when it adopted a law on internal displacement in 2018.¹⁵

While national legislation may represent a basis for comprehensive protection, many governments are in practice either unable or unwilling to assist or even recognise IDPs. As a result, Kälin has argued that international actors may, “if need be, substitute for the government in the absence of its willingness or ability to protect the rights of the displaced.”¹⁶ This has been cemented by the Responsibility to Protect, adopted in 2005 at the UN World Summit.¹⁷ However, application of R2P has been limited, leaving many of the world’s IDPs devoid of protection from either their government or the international community.¹⁸

Progress has been slow. In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants mentioned “the need for reflection on effective strategies to ensure adequate protection and assistance for internally displaced persons and to prevent and reduce such displacement.”¹⁹ As a result of opposition from participating states wary of undermining national sovereignty however, internal displacement received only four mentions and a footnote in the subsequent Global Compact on Refugees.²⁰

The High-level panel on internal displacement, established by the UN Secretary General in 2019 to find concrete solutions to internal displacement, is an encouraging sign of renewed political attention.²¹ The Panel’s report is expected to identify innovative and concrete recommendations to better prevent, respond, and achieve solutions to internal displacement.²² Progress, unfortunately, has been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the meantime, another encouraging sign of increasing recognition has been the adoption of the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS)’s International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS), the implementation of which is supported by a large coalition of UN Agencies, civil society actors and governments.²³

¹⁴ UNHCR, “UNHCR welcomes Ethiopia’s ratification of Kampala Convention”, February 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/2/5e468f7d4/unhcr-welcomes-ethiopias-ratification-kampala-convention.html>;
IDMC, *Africa report on internal displacement*, December 2019, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201912-Africa-report.pdf>

¹⁵ Niger, *Loi n° 2018-74 du 10 décembre 2018 relative à la protection et à l’assistance aux personnes déplacées internes*, 10 December 2018, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ce404914.html>

¹⁶ Kälin, W. “The Guiding Principles On Internal Displacement As International Minimum Standard And Protection Tool”, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 24, Issue 3, (2005): 32

¹⁷ Roberta Cohen, *Reconciling R2P with IDP protection*, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0325_internal_displacement_cohen.pdf

¹⁸ Roberta Cohen, *Reconciling R2P with IDP protection*, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0325_internal_displacement_cohen.pdf

¹⁹ United Nations, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, 2016, https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/NY_Declaration.pdf

²⁰ United Nations, *Global Compact on Refugees*, 2018, https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf

²¹ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

²² “UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement”, United Nations, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/content/what-we-do>

²³ IDMC, “Why we should all celebrate the publication of the international recommendations on IDP statistics”, 2021, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/why-we-should-all-celebrate-the-publication-of-the-international-recommendations-on>

The displacement continuum

Displacement doesn't start or end at a border. There is a close relationship between people uprooted within their country and those who seek refuge abroad. Many refugees are internally displaced before leaving their country of origin, and returning refugees often go back to internal displacement. In order to investigate the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movements and thereby draw attention back to the invisible majority of displaced people, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has since 2018 conducted a series of studies with IDPs, refugees²⁴ and returning refugees from Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. A total of 1,470 survey interviews have been conducted, complemented by qualitative data shared by research participants and key informants.²⁵ While the research is not representative, it offers useful insight into patterns of internal and cross-border displacement. The following provides an overview of the key findings.

From internal displacement to cross-border movement

Internal displacement is often a precursor to cross border movements. In conflict settings, few refugees seek international protection before experiencing displacement in their country of origin; even in authoritarian states with low reported numbers of IDPs, those seeking to flee persecution are in fact often forced into hiding before seeking refuge abroad.²⁶ Of all refugees and returning refugees surveyed by IDMC since 2018, fifty-seven per cent were internally displaced before leaving their country of origin, and a third suffered multiple internal displacements before crossing the border.

In many cases, cross-border movements occur when IDPs are unable to find safety or achieve durable solutions in their country of origin. Following the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan in 2013, for example, Favor²⁷ attempted to seek safety in a Protection of Civilian (POC) site; continued insecurity soon prompted her to seek refuge abroad: "we decided to cross the border because it was not safe in Bentiu POC," she said. In Colombia, Martín first fled internally to Bogotá after being extorted by the FARC, but the group soon made it clear he would find no safety in his country of origin: "They told me that no matter which part of the country I was in, they would kill me if I refused to cooperate," he said. "I wanted to try to live in my country, but when I saw this wouldn't be possible, I made the decision to leave." Marwa and her family, from Iraq, had likewise hoped to remain in their country of origin. After three years in a leaking caravan in Erbil in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq however, with no solutions to their displacement in sight, they made the decision to cross into Jordan. Neither Favor, Martín nor Marwa initially aspired to cross borders; their decision to seek refuge abroad was ultimately due to a perceived lack of opportunities for durable solutions in their country of origin.

Although evidence suggests that most refugees are internally displaced before seeking refuge abroad, it is also evident that not all IDPs cross borders.²⁸ Many do not have the capacity to do so, even when they face continued insecurity in their countries of origin. In some cases, insecurity is itself a barrier to

²⁴ Note: for the purpose of this paper, the term "refugee" is understood to include any person compelled to leave their country of origin because their life, safety or freedom are at risk. This includes not only refugees formally recognised as such, but also people in refugee-like situations, such as asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants.

²⁵ IDMC, *The displacement continuum: the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movement in seven countries*, June 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/the-displacement-continuum-the-relationship-between-internal-displacement-and-cross>

²⁶ David Cantor and Jacob Apollo, "Internal Displacement, Internal Migration and Refugee Flows: Connecting the dots", Research Briefing Paper, UNSG High Level Panel on Internal Displacement, August 2020, https://rli.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/IDRP%20Research%20Briefing%20Paper_1.pdf

²⁷ Note: all names have been changed.

²⁸ David Cantor and Jacob Apollo, "Internal Displacement, Internal Migration and Refugee Flows: Connecting the dots", Research Briefing Paper, UNSG High Level Panel on Internal Displacement, August 2020, https://rli.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/IDRP%20Research%20Briefing%20Paper_1.pdf

cross-border movement. “I couldn’t cross the border because the roads were too dangerous,” explained Alimah in South Sudan. More often, the barrier is financial: over half of IDPs surveyed by IDMC cited cost as a barrier to their ability to cross a border. This is exacerbated by the financial losses incurred during displacement. “I lost everything that could have earned me money for travelling,” Joyce said in South Sudan. Compounding the situation are restrictive migration policies which limit opportunities for international protection, and force people to resort instead to irregular modes of migration, both costly and risky. In Yemen, borders to neighbouring Saudi Arabia and Oman are strictly controlled, while Djibouti is located a sea voyage away across the Gulf of Aden. Clandestine journeys to Europe can cost as much as 26,000USD.²⁹ As a result, one Yemeni interviewee felt, “Even if they reopened the airports, only the rich would be able to leave. The poor would be left behind.” Little wonder, then, that the profiles of IDPs sometimes differ from those of refugees.³⁰

Returning to internal displacement

Not only are many refugees internally displaced before crossing borders, but many returning refugees become internally displaced upon return to their country of origin. Afghanistan’s 2013 National IDP policy recognises that many refugees and undocumented Afghans who return from Pakistan and Iran find themselves in secondary displacement; for the purpose of the policy, the definition of IDPs includes returning refugees and deported migrants who are unable to settle in their places of origin as a result of insecurity.³¹

Despite growing recognition of the risk of internal displacement for returning refugees, a continued lack of consensus regarding what constitutes internal displacement for returning refugees undermines efforts to assess the scale of the phenomena. Among all returnees surveyed by IDMC since 2018 in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria and South Sudan³², nearly 77 per cent were living outside their area of origin at the time of the research. This does not necessarily connote internal displacement: some selected to settle elsewhere in pursuit of new livelihood opportunities. However, many of these returning refugees had in fact been unable to complete their return journey, or had been displaced again after return. Meanwhile, many of the returning refugees who had been able to resettle in their areas of origin were finding it difficult to rebuild their lives, and remained in situations of heightened vulnerability as a result of their displacement.

According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) framework on durable solutions for internally displaced persons, “a durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement.”³³ Were this criteria to be applied to returning refugees, many would be considered internally displaced. Among those surveyed by IDMC, few meet the criteria identified by the IASC framework as necessary for achieving a durable solution;

²⁹ IDMC, *‘Even if they reopened the airports’: barriers to cross border movement expose Yemenis to repeated internal displacement*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/even-if-they-reopened-the-airports-barriers-to-cross-border-movement-expose-yemenis-to>

³⁰ David Cantor and Jacob Apollo, “Internal Displacement, Internal Migration and Refugee Flows: Connecting the dots”, Research Briefing Paper, UNSG High Level Panel on Internal Displacement, August 2020, https://rli.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/IDRP%20Research%20Briefing%20Paper_1.pdf

³¹ Afghanistan, *National Policy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on internal displacement*, 2013, https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/law-and-policy/files/afghanistan/Afghanistan_national_policy_English_2013.pdf

³² Note: no returning refugees were interviewed in Yemen, where research for this thematic series was also carried out.

³³ IASC, *Framework on durable solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, 2010, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/iasc-framework-on-durable-solutions-for-internally-displaced-persons/#:~:text=The%20Framework%20aims%20to%20provide,natural%20or%20human%20made%20disasters>

ongoing insecurity and housing destruction were particular barriers, exacerbated by limited access to employment and lack of documentation.³⁴

Long-term safety and security for returning refugees is indeed far from guaranteed. Across IDMC's studies, nearly a third of all returnees gave safety in their country of origin a score of 5 out of 10 or less. In the face of continued insecurity, some returning refugees go back to their former homes only to be displaced again. Dadvar, for example, went back to Afghanistan in 2010 and settled in his area of origin, but was displaced again after a shift in conflict dynamics. "I am not living in Sherzad district anymore because of the war between the Taliban and Islamic State," he said. Others are unable to return to their areas of origin at all. "We decided to return to South Sudan because of the peace agreement, but its implementation is still in process and we're unable to go back home for fear that the war might break out again, so it's better to stay here," explained Patrick, a returning refugee living in a Protection of Civilian (POC) site in South Sudan.

Neither are returning refugees guaranteed an adequate standard of living. Among all returning refugees surveyed by IDMC, forty per cent of those who owned property prior to their displacement said it had since been destroyed, and an additional 32 per cent said their property had been damaged. This was the case for Grace, who was unable to go back to her former village after she returned to Nigeria from Cameroon: "We don't have any shelter, our homes were burned down. If we go back now, we will have nowhere to stay," she said. Likewise, Hacen was forced to settle in Hamam Al-Alil IDP camp after returning to Iraq, his former home having been destroyed – the camp having since been closed, he is likely to have been displaced once again.³⁵

Beyond housing, access to employment and livelihoods is a further hurdle for returning refugees, many of whom will have lost access to productive assets and other capital as a result of displacement. Hala and her husband used to own a shop in Mosul, but it was destroyed in the battle against the Islamic State. Nearly 83 per cent of returning refugees surveyed were finding it difficult or impossible to survive on their current income. Close to 30 per cent of them said they went hungry several times a week. "I am doing nothing here, there are no opportunities", said a returning refugee in South Sudan. "I even beg in order to eat, so life here is very bad."

Returning refugees' ability to overcome their vulnerabilities is often undermined by lack of personal or other documentation, which can impact access to assistance and basic services, access to effective remedies and justice including property restitution, and participation in public affairs. Only a quarter of the returning refugees in South Sudan and a third of those in Nigeria had all their documentation, either because it had been lost during displacement or because they never had it in the first place. "When we were fleeing, we didn't have the mind to look for an identification card," said Patience in Nigeria. Accessing replacement documentation can be a challenge. Just over half of returnees surveyed in Nigeria believed that mechanisms were available to help them get new documentation.

Given the challenges they face upon return to their country of origin, many returning refugees are unable to find durable solutions. Some live alongside IDPs in formal camps or informal settlements because of continued insecurity or housing destruction in their areas of origin; others have returned to their former homes, but face continued assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement.

³⁴ IASC, *Framework on durable solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, 2010, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/iasc-framework-on-durable-solutions-for-internally-displaced-persons/#:~:text=The%20Framework%20aims%20to%20provide,natural%20or%20human%2Dmade%20disasters>

³⁵ NRC, "Iraq's camp closures leave 100,000 people in limbo", November 2020, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2020/november/iraqs-camp-closures-leave-100000-people-in-limbo/>

When should these returning refugees be counted as internally displaced? Currently, unless they experience a new displacement after return, returning refugees are rarely included in IDP stock figures. The Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS), for example, recommends that returning refugees be counted as IDPs only if they are previous IDPs who were outside the country less than 12 months, or if they experience a new displacement after their return.³⁶ Although this is designed to avoid double counting and align the international recommendations on IDPs statistics with those on refugee statistics, this approach leaves out large numbers of returning refugees living in situations of internal displacement.

Implications for policy and practice

Recognising the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movements has important implications for policy and practice. Preventing the spillover of conflict and displacement across borders has long motivated the response to internal displacement.³⁷ Since IDPs risk becoming refugees if they are unable to find safety or achieve durable solutions in their country of origin, there is an added incentive for the international community to prevent and resolve internal displacement.

At the same time, despite the international community's eagerness to prevent refugee flows, barriers to cross-border movement must be overcome to ensure that IDPs are able to seek international protection outside their country of origin; restrictive migration policies heighten the risk of repeated displacement, which exacerbates vulnerability and undermines prospects for durable solutions.

Meanwhile, more efforts are needed to ensure that the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable migrants are respected, and their needs met in their host countries to prevent premature returns from resulting in internal displacement. This also requires challenging the concept of internal flight alternatives.³⁸ UNHCR has argued that people denied asylum on the basis of internal flight alternatives should not be confronted with undue hardship in their country of origin, including the inability to earn a living or having to relocate to a slum.³⁹ This should prevent internal displacement being used as a basis to deny international protection. In practice, it does not. Many host states seem to consider internal displacement to be a reasonable alternative to refugee status. By deporting people whose requests for asylum they have denied, they contribute to further displacement, undermining prospects for durable solutions.

Recognising the risk of internal displacement, providers of return and reintegration assistance should be wary not to encourage premature returns which are likely to prove unsustainable. Cash assistance or in-kind reintegration support, such as vocational training and start-up funding, do not guarantee durable solutions; neither do they protect returning refugees from becoming internally displaced. A shift towards more holistic area-based approaches, which target assistance based on vulnerability rather than status, would ensure that returning refugees receive the support they require even if they are not

³⁶ EGRIS, *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics*, March 2020,

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/7723677/10225952/International+Recommendations+on+IDP+Statistics.pdf/98b79165-d6c8-d579-88c0-6f67f5feb0c9>

³⁷ Roberta Cohen, *Reconciling R2P with IDP protection*, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0325_internal_displacement_cohen.pdf

³⁸ IDMC, "Internal Displacement is not an acceptable alternative to international protection", March 2020,

<https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/internal-displacement-is-not-an-acceptable-alternative-to-international-protection>

³⁹ UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: "Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative" within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2003, <https://www.unhcr.org/3f28d5cd4.html>

formally counted as IDPs; and that vulnerable host community members, likewise, would be better supported.

Socioeconomic impacts of internal displacement

In addition to being a potential precursor of cross-border movements, internal displacement also has a significant financial impact on the countries affected. IDMC's estimates that the global economic impact of internal displacement in 2019 was nearly \$20 billion.⁴⁰ This section will assess the costs and losses associated with internal displacement's most direct consequences on health, shelter, education, security and livelihoods and examine the different ways in which internally displaced women and girls, children and youth, older people and people with disabilities experience displacement. The section will argue that investing in preventive solutions is essential to ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

Measuring the costs

Whether it occurs in the context of conflict, violence or disasters, internal displacement can have significant financial repercussions for IDPs, the communities that host them, and the communities they leave behind. Displacement not only separates people from their homes, assets and social networks, but also disrupts their access to income and services, which can limit IDPs' ability to contribute to the economy. Its impacts on housing, livelihoods, health, education and security can affect society as a whole and generate costs and losses that must be borne by IDPs themselves, host communities, government agencies and aid providers. In the case of large-scale and protracted displacement crises, economic repercussions can add up to a significant share of a country's GDP. At the global level, IDMC estimated that the total cost of meeting the needs of the 50.8 million people recorded to be living in internal displacement at the end of 2019 was nearly \$20 billion.⁴¹

The impacts are not always negative and vary depending on the context. In some cases, displacement can result in positive outcomes for IDPs and their host communities. For instance, children displaced from rural areas where schools are scarce to urban areas where they are more accessible, may experience higher enrolment rates. Business owners in the host community may benefit from the arrival of a new labour force and higher numbers of consumers. However, in most cases, the economic consequences of displacement are negative. Measuring the costs and losses associated with displacement in different settings can highlight the financial value of investing in measures to prevent and reduce displacement. On a more practical level, understanding how displacement affects the economic resources of households and where the greatest financial burdens lie can inform the humanitarian and development support offered by governments and aid providers, and assist them to more effectively address the needs of IDPs.

IDMC conducted one such study in Kenya in 2019.⁴² Using an original survey tool, 165 IDPs and 154 members of the host community were interviewed in Nakuru County to assess the socioeconomic impacts of displacement. Although surveyed IDPs had originally arrived in the area in 2007 and 2008 due to post-election violence and had received support from the government and its partners, the consequences of displacement on their health, education, housing conditions and financial resources

⁴⁰ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>; IDMC, *Unveiling the Cost of Internal Displacement 2020 Report*, January 2021, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/unveiling-the-cost-of-internal-displacement-0>

⁴¹ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>; IDMC, *Unveiling the Cost of Internal Displacement 2020 Report* January 2021, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/unveiling-the-cost-of-internal-displacement-0>

⁴² IDMC, *Measuring the Cost of Internal Displacement on IDPs and Hosts: Case Studies in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia*, January 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202001-cost-of-displacement-africa-case-studies.pdf>

were still severe 11 years later. The IDPs interviewed suffered from both a reduction in their average salary and a rise in unemployment following their displacement. Only 11 per cent of surveyed IDPs managed to maintain the same source of income. Fifty-three per cent found another source of income, while over a third became unemployed and had no income.

Although surveyed IDPs earned on average twice as much as the people living in their future host community prior to their displacement, after their displacement, they made on average \$70 per month, compared with \$92 in the host community. In addition to their income, many surveyed IDPs reported losing property and goods because of their displacement, with the average loss of \$6,400 per respondent.

The study also highlighted some of the consequences experienced by the host community. Nearly all surveyed hosts, or 96 per cent, reported paying additional expenses after IDPs arrived in the area, including buying clothes, food, bedding and furniture for IDPs. Families who shared their homes with IDPs also reported having to pay for increased consumption of water, electricity and cooking fuel. Surveyed hosts reported a deterioration in the quality of education since the arrival of IDPs due to overcrowding, as well as a rise in the average cost of healthcare.

These financial costs and losses can place a significant burden on overstretched humanitarian resources and fragile national economies. Based on an original methodology and using publicly available data, IDMC estimated the cost of providing every IDP with support for housing, healthcare, education and security, and their loss of income, for 22 countries, arriving at an average economic impact of \$390 per IDP for one year of displacement.⁴³

The estimated cost and loss associated with displacement ranged from \$114 per IDP for one year of displacement in Colombia, up to \$869 per IDP in Syria. This variation is a result of a range of factors including differences in the level of need across displaced populations and the cost of meeting those needs, as well as IDPs' estimated loss of income. The greatest financial burden associated with internal displacement in the 22 countries analysed stemmed from loss of livelihoods. With food insecurity rising in many of the countries analysed, the cost of meeting IDPs' health needs – including the provision of food, nutrition and healthcare – represented the second highest burden.

In the case of Somalia, the total cost of meeting the needs of the country's 2.6 million IDPs and their estimated loss of income for a year of displacement was estimated to be just over \$1 billion, which represents approximately 21 per cent of Somalia's GDP in 2018. In a country where over 45 per cent of IDPs report having been displaced for three or more years,⁴⁴ these figures suggest that the cost of protracted displacement is unsustainable and places an enormous economic strain on IDPs, host communities, governments and aid providers. OCHA requested \$1 billion worth of funding as part of the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia, but this was to meet the humanitarian needs of *all* crisis-affected populations in the country, not only displaced. In the absence of adequate resources, IDPs and their hosts are often left to fill the gaps and, as a result, many needs remain unaddressed.

These global estimates are conservative, partly due to the limited data available and the complexity of the issue. They do not account for indirect costs or the financial impacts associated with the longer-term consequences of internal displacement. The cost of adapting infrastructure to cope with the arrival of IDPs in a new area are also excluded, as are the impacts of displacement on host communities or

⁴³ IDMC, *Unveiling the Cost of Internal Displacement 2020 Report*, January 2021, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/unveiling-the-cost-of-internal-displacement-0>

⁴⁴ OCHA, *Somalia: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019*, November 2018, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Somalia_2019_HNO.PDF

communities of origin. For instance, the reduction in local residents in communities of origin could lead to a decrease in consumption, which may impact business for those left behind.⁴⁵ However, we are currently unable to measure these costs and losses with the data available. Despite only representing a fraction of the costs and losses associated with internal displacement, these figures already reveal the substantial economic impacts it can have for individuals, society, and the economy at large.

Implications for policy and practice

The strain internal displacement can place on national economies and the resources of governments and aid providers highlights the unsustainability of relying on humanitarian responses to address displacement. This reinforces the need to conceptualise internal displacement as a longer-term development issue, rather than solely a humanitarian concern, and to recognise not only the human and protection value, but also the economic value of investing in measures to prevent and reduce it. Taking pre-emptive action and investing in peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction and early warning systems is not only less harmful for people, but could prove to be far less costly in the long run.

While more remains to be done to ensure these recommendations are translated into impactful action, promising practices are emerging. Germany's Transitional Development Assistance instrument employs a people-centred, multi-sectoral approach to assist vulnerable populations, including IDPs.⁴⁶ By linking humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peacebuilding in a single budget line, it aims to strengthen resilience and contribute to crisis prevention.⁴⁷ France's Minka Peace and Resilience Fund, which finances structural medium-term interventions in the Sahel, Lake Chad, Central African Republic and the Middle East, seeks to address the root causes of crises and conflicts, and may hold useful lessons for fostering more sustainable solutions to internal displacement.⁴⁸

In every sector, it is essential that IDPs are recognized as active citizens, rather than mere beneficiaries of assistance, and are able to participate in the economy and in finding solutions to their own displacement. A study in the Democratic Republic of the Congo showed how through entrepreneurship and innovation, IDPs were able to add value to the local economy and create new markets.⁴⁹ Similarly, a programme in Colombia, which seeks to foster the economic integration of IDPs and host communities, has successfully supported 700 IDPs to gain formal employment and laid the foundations for improved access to services for all.⁵⁰ Understanding the multidimensional impacts of displacement, including the consequences it has for non-displaced populations, is therefore key to mitigating its negative impacts and seizing the opportunities it may present.

⁴⁵ Cazabat, Christelle, "Can human development turn the tide on internal displacement?", United Nations Development Programme, 19 June 2018, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/can-human-development-turn-tide-internal-displacement> ; IDMC, *Multidimensional Impacts of Internal Displacement*, October 2018, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201810-literature-review-economic-impacts.pdf>

⁴⁶ Al-Mahaidi, Ala, "Financing Opportunities for Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement: Building on Current Thinking and Practice", *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 39(4), December 2020: 481-493; UNHCR, "Strengthening resilience in crises through Transitional Development Assistance", 28 January 2020, <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/strengthening-resilience-crisis-through-transitional-development-assistance-tda>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Al-Mahaidi, Ala, "Financing Opportunities for Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement: Building on Current Thinking and Practice", *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 39(4), December 2020: 481-493; "Minka: The Peace and Resilience Fund", AFD, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.afd.fr/en/minka-peace-and-resilience-fund>

⁴⁹ Jacobs, Carolien, Stanislas Lubala Kubiha, and Rachel Sifa Katembera, "The Upward Spiral Towards Local Integration of IDPs: Agency and Economics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 39(4), December 2020: 537-543.

⁵⁰ "Economic integration of internally displaced people and host communities", GIZ, accessed January 13, 2021, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/40023.html>

Differentiated impacts

Assessing the socioeconomic impacts of displacement can assist governments and aid providers to tailor their interventions for greater efficiency. To do so, however, better data is needed not only on the number of people displaced and the duration of their displacement, but also on the ways in which different groups and individuals experience displacement. Men, women, children, youth, older people and people with disabilities all have distinct needs during displacement and face specific challenges, which must be considered when designing programmes to support them. Collecting data disaggregated by sex, age and disability status at a minimum is therefore essential if responses to displacement are to be truly inclusive.

Women and girls

More than 25 million women and girls were estimated to be living in internal displacement as a result of conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2019.⁵¹ Displacement can reinforce pre-existing discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantages experienced by women and girls and exposes them to unique security risks. While quantitative data remains limited, there is evidence that women may be at greater risk of displacement than men.⁵² Women's greater vulnerability to many types of violence may prompt them to flee their homes more quickly than men. The fact that women tend to achieve lower levels of socioeconomic development than men worldwide, may also make them less able to repair or rebuild their homes following a disaster. For instance, After cyclone Idai struck Mozambique in March 2019, the proportion of women aged 18 to 59 in emergency shelters was higher than that of men.⁵³

Women also tend to face more barriers in securing decent livelihoods, shelter, education and healthcare during displacement.⁵⁴ In a survey conducted by IDMC of 150 IDPs living in the Oromia region of Ethiopia in 2019, a higher proportion of surveyed women than men became unemployed as a result of their displacement.⁵⁵ In a similar study conducted in Nakuru County, Kenya, 32 per cent of surveyed women reported feeling less safe in their host community than they did before their displacement, compared with only 12 per cent of men.⁵⁶ The main reason cited for their feeling of insecurity was thefts in their community.

Internal displacement can also present specific challenges for girls' enrolment and retention in schools. IDMC surveyed 163 IDPs living in Banadir near Somalia's capital of Mogadishu in 2019.⁵⁷ The proportion of internally displaced boys attending school increased from 29 per cent in their rural community of origin to 41 per cent in the urban host area. This rise in attendance may have been due to better access to school in their urban settlement and the fact that boys no longer had to look after livestock and were

⁵¹ IDMC, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

⁵² IDMC, *Women and Girls in Internal Displacement*, March 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202003-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-women.pdf>

⁵³ IOM/DTM and IDMC, *Eight months after Idai: chronology of displacement, humanitarian needs and challenges going forward in Mozambique*, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/eight-months-after-idai-chronology-displacement-humanitarian-needs-and-challenges>

⁵⁴ IDMC, *Women and Girls in Internal Displacement*, March 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202003-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-women.pdf>

⁵⁵ IDMC, *Measuring the Cost of Internal Displacement on IDPs and Hosts: Case Studies in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia*, January 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202001-cost-of-displacement-africa-case-studies.pdf>

⁵⁶ IDMC, *Measuring the Cost of Internal Displacement on IDPs and Hosts: Case Studies in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia*, January 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202001-cost-of-displacement-africa-case-studies.pdf>

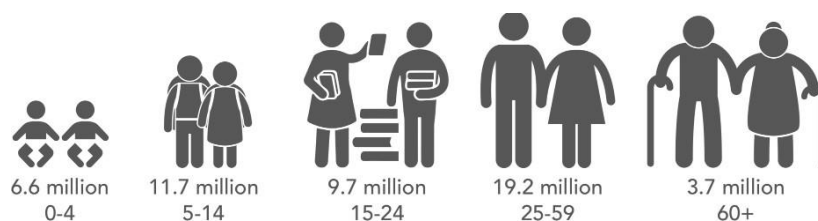
⁵⁷ IDMC, *Measuring the Cost of Internal Displacement on IDPs and Hosts: Case Studies in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia*, January 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202001-cost-of-displacement-africa-case-studies.pdf>

free to attend school. In contrast, girls' school enrolment decreased from 45 per cent before displacement to 29 per cent in the host area.⁵⁸ Interviewed parents cited cost as the primary reason for not sending their children to school. In addition to financial barriers, early child marriage, safety concerns, and the need for girls to assist with domestic or household chores can pose further obstacles to girls' education, which may be compounded by displacement. Such challenges can have longer-term repercussions and limit the social and economic opportunities available to girls.

Children, youth and older people

Information on the age of IDPs and how different age groups are affected by displacement is vital to assess their needs and design programmes that can support them at every stage of their lives. There were an estimated 6.6 million IDPs between the ages of 0 and 4 at the end of 2019, 11.7 million between 5 and 14, 9.7 million between 15 and 24, 19.2 million between 25 and 59 and 3.7 million over the age of 60 (see Figure 1).⁵⁹

Figure 1. Global estimate of the number of people of different age groups living in internal displacement as a result of conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2019



These figures are reached by applying the percentage of the national population in broad age groups – estimated by the UN Population Division's World Population Prospects 2019 – to the number of people recorded to be living in internal displacement associated with conflict, violence and disasters in each country at the end of 2019.⁶⁰ However, the demographic distribution in the displaced population is not always the same as the overall population, and, in the case of children, it is often higher. For instance, although children make up 49 per cent of the national population in Cameroon, one survey in the north region revealed that 62 per cent of the internally displaced population was below the age of 18.⁶¹ This means that the estimates presented in Figure 1 are, in the case of children, likely lower than the true figure.

Reduced social protection and limited coping mechanisms can expose children to a higher risk of abuse, neglect and violence during displacement, especially if they are separated from their family.⁶² Overcrowded living conditions, poor sanitation, as well as inadequate access to food and healthcare can

⁵⁸ IDMC, *Measuring the Cost of Internal Displacement on IDPs and Hosts: Case Studies in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia*, January 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202001-cost-of-displacement-africa-case-studies.pdf>

⁵⁹ IDMC, *Number of IDPs by age at the end of 2019*, April 2019, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/number-of-idps-by-age-at-the-end-of-2019>

⁶⁰ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

⁶¹ IOM, *Matrice de suivi des déplacements (DTM) Dashboard #17 Cameroun- region de l'extreme nord 01 – 13 Février 2019*, February 2019, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/dashboard_fr_dmt17.pdf

⁶² IDMC, *Twice Invisible: Accounting for internally displaced children*, November 2019, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201911-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-children.pdf>

lead to a deterioration in displaced children's physical and mental health, which may be worsened by the trauma of displacement. Teachers interviewed by IDMC in an IDP settlement in Ethiopia noted that the psychological distress associated with children's displacement had affected their ability to learn in the host area.

Interviews with internally displaced youth in Colombia, South Sudan and Somalia also indicated that disruptions to education, discrimination, and differences in the skills sets between displaced and non-displaced populations can severely limit the ability of displaced youth to access adequate livelihoods.⁶³ While such findings highlight the need for early interventions to enable young IDPs to overcome these challenges and earn a living, tailored support is needed for older IDPs, who may be restricted from working. To allow for better planning of resources and programmes to support IDPs of all ages, collecting more age-disaggregated information in displacement settings is an essential step.

People with disabilities

There has been growing attention on the need to better understand the experiences of people with disabilities in internal displacement and to foster their inclusion in humanitarian action and sustainable development.⁶⁴ The World Health Organisation estimates that around 15 per cent of the globe's population is living with a disability.⁶⁵ However, the prevalence of disabilities is likely to be much higher in countries affected by conflict, violence and disasters, which are usually home to large displaced populations.⁶⁶ In Syria, which recorded the globe's largest internally displaced population at the end of 2019, 27 per cent of the total population above 12 years of age has a disability, according to a national household survey conducted in June 2019.⁶⁷ At present, people with disabilities are largely under-identified in internal displacement contexts for various reasons including stigmatisation, accessibility issues and overly narrow definitions. As a result, there are significant gaps in knowledge of their experiences of displacement and how to best support them.⁶⁸

Discrimination and barriers in accessing information and services before and during displacement may amplify the challenges and risks experienced by people with disabilities, and hinder their ability to find durable solutions. IDPs living with disabilities in Yemen have reported shortages of assistive devices, including wheelchairs and crutches, inaccessible latrines and washing facilities, and having to rely on relatives to collect aid on their behalf.⁶⁹ Studies in IDP camps in South Sudan have also revealed that IDPs living with disabilities struggle to access healthcare and health information, and attend school facilities.⁷⁰ This highlights the need for service delivery and infrastructure to be adjusted to facilitate

⁶³ IDMC, *Becoming an Adult in Internal Displacement*, September 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/becoming-an-adult-in-internal-displacement-key-figures-challenges-and-opportunities>

⁶⁴ See e.g. IASC, *Guidelines for Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, November 2019, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines>; UNDRR, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, 2015, <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>; UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals 2030*, 2015, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

⁶⁵ WHO, *World Report on Disability*, 2011, https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf?ua=1

⁶⁶ UNHCR, *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2019*, June 2020, p. 35, <https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>

⁶⁷ Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme, *Disability: Prevalence and Impact, Syrian Arab Republic*, 2019, https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Disability_Prevalence-and-Impact_FINAL-2.pdf

⁶⁸ IDMC, *Number of IDPs by age at the end of 2019*, April 2019, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/number-of-idps-by-age-at-the-end-of-2019>

⁶⁹ Amnesty International, *Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Yemen*, 17 February 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE3118222020ENGLISH.pdf>

⁷⁰ Light for the World, *Input to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Protection of Internally Displaced Persons with Disabilities*, 14 February 2020, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/CallforInputs_InternallyDisplacedPersons.aspx

more inclusive support to IDPs.⁷¹ In order to do so, however, better data is needed on how many IDPs are living with disabilities, where they are located, and what their specific needs and resources are.

Implications for policy and practice

The first step in providing all internally displaced people with adequate support is to understand their specific needs based on disaggregated data on age, sex and disability status. Global and national-level estimates can be useful to raise awareness on the scale of the issue and generate debate, but are not enough to inform local programming. Yet collecting disaggregated individual-level data is far from an easy endeavour, particularly in displacement situations where data collectors may face security or accessibility challenges, or lack of financial, human or technical resources. In emergency situations where assessments must be done as quickly as possible, data is often obtained by asking key informants about the general situation of their community. At best, household surveys may be organised, providing household level information.

While practical constraints mean that it is not always possible to collect disaggregated data, in cases where it is possible, it should be systematically integrated into planning and budgeting to enhance responses at the local level. IDPs should be given the opportunity to participate actively in the collection and analysis of information that relates to their community. They can also contribute to the implementation and monitoring of initiatives that seek to support them, if enabling environments are in place and they are given the resources to do so.

Analysing the socioeconomic impacts of displacement and how this varies across different displacement contexts can reveal signs of good practice. Expanding the collection of data on the costs and losses associated with internal displacement and how different groups are affected is therefore crucial to informing prevention measures, strengthening responses, and fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

⁷¹ IDMC, *Number of IDPs by age at the end of 2019*, April 2019, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/number-of-idps-by-age-at-the-end-of-2019>

Searching for solutions

The scale of internal displacement today has major social and economic impacts on countries and communities. Unaddressed crises lead to heightened risks of onward displacement and refugee movements. There is a growing recognition of these impacts and their policy implications, and promising developments across the globe illustrate how countries are beginning to put internal displacement on national agendas. Encouragingly, these local and national initiatives show greater levels of political commitment than ever before. There are examples of strengthened capacity in humanitarian operations, as in Somalia's humanitarian response to displacement; in development sectors and urban planning, as for example through investments in education and employment generation for displaced populations in secondary cities of Bangladesh; as well as instances of better coordination and increased investment, as in the initial stages of the Durable Solutions Initiative in Ethiopia. Over the past few years, we have also seen improvements in the quantity and quality of data available in several countries, from Mali to the Philippines, from Brazil to Iraq, which enables not only better reporting and analysis, but also more effective response and risk mitigation.

To seize this opportunity, we can build on the lessons learned from existing efforts over the past years at both national and regional levels. Four lessons stand out and carve out a clear pathway for future efforts in addressing internal displacement, and with it global displacement and inequality.

Lesson 1: When internal displacement is recognised as an economic and human security concern, and where it is aligned with national and regional priorities, it can catalyse new investments and enable effective coordination

Recognising internal displacement as a development concern has the potential to catalyse political attention and institutional commitment as witnessed in a number of countries over the last few years. National laws and policies that address internal displacement comprehensively as a humanitarian and development issue can catalyse the establishment of institutions and mechanisms dedicated to preventing and responding to it in a more coordinated manner. For example, Somalia's national development plan includes provisions for IDPs and other vulnerable groups, and Afghanistan has recognised internal displacement as a significant challenge to poverty reduction in its SDG reporting.⁷²

Regional and global initiatives also play a role in generating political support for issues that may be more difficult to tackle at the national level. The African Union (AU) and other regional and sub-regional bodies on the continent have done much to encourage the development and implementation of national laws and policies on internal displacement.⁷³ Progress has also been made in other regions, such as Europe and the Americas. The High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, set up by the UN secretary general António Guterres in 2019, is another sign of renewed political attention as it seeks to identify concrete and long-term solutions to protracted displacement and develop a realistic agenda for the prevention of future displacement.⁷⁴

Lesson 2: Existing governance and financing mechanisms have direct implications for countries' capacities to address internal displacement

⁷² IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

⁷³ IDMC, *Africa report on internal displacement*, December 2019, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201912-Africa-report.pdf>

⁷⁴ "UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement", United Nations, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/content/what-we-do>

An analysis of short and long-term responses across different contexts shows how both formal and informal governance structures influence a country's ability to address protracted displacement.⁷⁵ Countries with robust governance mechanisms, including a clear allocation of responsibilities across sectors and administrative levels, adequate human, technical and financial resources and transparent budgets, are best placed to develop strong capacity to address internal displacement.

The capacity to account for and respond to the phenomenon needs to be strong across the board, which often requires additional resources, particularly at the local level. This includes involving IDPs and their host communities in planning and in the provision of basic services, and supporting them in developing new skills. Colombia's Transitional Solutions Initiative has been recognised in this regard as good practice beyond the country's borders.⁷⁶ A key lesson was the important role of local committees, who brought together communities, municipalities and local, national and international NGOs for biweekly meetings, emphasising the importance of involving local authorities in the design, implementation and continuation of international responses.

Sustainable solutions to displacement also require predictable long-term funding at the local level, as recognised several years ago and embodied in the vision of the *Grand Bargain*.⁷⁷ This is particularly the case for rapidly growing cities that become a destination for large numbers of IDPs but which may not be prioritised in national budgets. Despite growing recognition of the fact, however, there is still a gap between the overall funding available and the small percentage channelled to those "at the frontline".

The hope is that more predictable, longer-term funding may support multi-year planning and strategic engagement at the country level. Multi-year funding and planning were key to the success of the Simon Pelé urban development programme in Haiti, which facilitated the return of people displaced by the 2010 earthquake.⁷⁸ Habitat for Humanity's Pathways to Permanence strategy provided a predictable five-year funding period for the programme, enabling its strategy to go beyond support for IDPs to include investments in neighbourhood infrastructure, security and DRR measures.

Lesson 3: Strong evidence can generate political incentives, but it has to go beyond the numbers of people displaced

Data that is authoritative and trusted, useable and accessible has potential to contribute to better policy and practice. Both the quantity and quality of data on internal displacement has increased significantly over the past decades. There is still much to do to improve coverage and reliability, but progress is being made. Good practices are emerging from new approaches, technologies and partnerships that help to improve our understanding of the scale, nature, impacts and risk of displacement. Therefore, data collection and analysis can and has to go beyond simple counting.

⁷⁵ Mercy Corps, *Rethinking return: lessons from Colombia, Liberia and Nigeria*, 2020, <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/rethinking-return-lessons>

⁷⁶ OCHA, *Reducing protracted internal displacement: a snapshot of successful humanitarian-development initiatives*, OCHA Policies and Studies Series, June 2019, <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Reducing%20Protracted%20Internal%20Displacement.pdf>

⁷⁷ "Initiative: Grand Bargain", Agenda for Humanity, accessed February 05, 2021, <https://agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>

⁷⁸ OCHA, *Reducing protracted internal displacement: a snapshot of successful humanitarian-development initiatives*, OCHA Policies and Studies Series, June 2019, <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Reducing%20Protracted%20Internal%20Displacement.pdf>

The evidence base on internal displacement has been further improved through new ways of gathering and processing data and increased collaboration between collectors, analysts and users. Mobile technology and data from social media can help understand displacement patterns before, during and after disasters. This type of data can be combined with official figures on evacuation and shelter occupation, as is done in the Philippines to provide unique insight into the phenomenon.⁷⁹

Countries with a national data strategy that enables regular reporting, is aligned with a legal framework and has a dedicated budget are also able to communicate their efforts and intentions in ways that are more likely to attract internal and external support. The Philippines provides a particularly good example of strong government ownership of displacement data. The Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Centre (DROMIC) is one of the most reliable national systems in Asia for data on displacement associated with both disasters and conflict.⁸⁰ Colombia's systematic collection of information on IDPs as part of its registry of victims of the country's civil war has been recognised as another good practice for many years.⁸¹ The system is well resourced and supported by a clear mandate.

Progress has also been made in measuring progress towards solutions, through a global library of durable solutions indicators and through longitudinal studies conducted at the national level, for example in Iraq.⁸² Moreover, advances are being made in assessing displacement risk, an important indicator of whether drivers of displacement are addressed, and a potent lever for advocating for prevention. More investment will be required in the coming years to understand and assess displacement risk in a qualitative and quantitative manner, particularly at the national and local level.

Probabilistic disaster displacement risk models, such as the one developed by IDMC, can point to global patterns and trends, and provide an important baseline for action and monitoring progress.⁸³ Country risk profiles, such as one done recently in Fiji, can help identify hotspots to inform national planning and trigger more in-depth risk assessments for at-risk localities.⁸⁴ Predictive analytics and statistical models of where and when displacement can be expected in regions with recurring displacement are also increasingly informing humanitarian response planning and preparedness.⁸⁵

Lesson 4: Tracking progress more systematically is a powerful way of advocating for more investment

Beyond the IDP numbers and risk metrics, what we are still missing is a more comprehensive understanding of which policies, institutions and investments are effective in different displacement

⁷⁹ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>

⁸⁰ Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center, accessed February 05, 2021, <https://dromic.dswd.gov.ph/>

⁸¹ Eurostat, *Technical report on statistics of internally displaced persons*, 2018, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Technical-Report/national-reporting/Technical-report-on-statistics-of-IDPs-E.pdf>

⁸² "Indicator Library", *Durable Solutions: measuring progress towards solutions for IDPs*, accessed February 05, 2021, <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/indicators-2/>; "IOM-GU Iraq IDP Study", Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, accessed February 05, 2021, <https://ccas.georgetown.edu/resources/iom-gu-iraq-idp-study/>

⁸³ "Displacement Risk", IDMC, accessed February 05, 2021, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/disaster-risk-model#:~:text=Displacement%20Risk,each%20year%2C%20decade%20or%20century>

⁸⁴ IDMC, *Sudden-onset hazards and the risk of future displacement in Fiji*, 2021, https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/fiji_riskprofile_idmc.pdf

⁸⁵ "Predictive Analytics", Centre for Humanitarian Data, accessed February 05, 2021, <https://centre.humdata.org/predictive-analytics/>

situations, and why. Most importantly, perhaps, until now we have not had the means to systematically assess progress is being made overall, whether nationally or globally. A new global initiative to support the assessment of progress seeks to address this gap. The Internal Displacement Index (IDI) is a composite measure that brings together indicators of governments' capacity to address displacement, the impacts of current crises and the underlying drivers that may lead to future displacement or enable solutions.⁸⁶

It also provides a framework for nationally adapted assessments, enabling countries to develop national dashboards with indicators relevant to their specific context. An example of such an approach has been tested in Georgia, where a country-specific assessment tool was developed in collaboration with IDMC and other national stakeholders in 2019 to monitor and better inform national efforts to support IDPs and prevent further displacement.⁸⁷

A country's willingness and ability to account for the number of IDPs on its territory, monitor assistance and report on progress toward durable solutions is a potent tool for generating and sustaining commitment at all levels. The international community has a unique opportunity now to invest into this potential with all the financial, human, technical and political resources that can be made available. Global crises, not least the COVID pandemic, have shown that immense resources can be found, and that international collaboration is possible if there is a common will. The persistent and global scale and severity of internal displacement presents a common challenge that only common action can overcome.

⁸⁶ IDMC, "Internal Displacement Index 2020 report", September 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/internal-displacement-index-2020-report>

⁸⁷ IDMC, *Global report on internal displacement 2020*, April 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>