

## TEN YEARS AFTER HUMANITARIAN REFORM: HOW ARE IDPS FARING?

### A SUMMARY

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#### *Why this study?*

It has been ten years since the Emergency Relief Coordinator initiated humanitarian reform, which was intended in large measure, to improve the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>1</sup> It is thus timely to step back and assess the impact of these reforms – the cluster system, strengthened role of humanitarian coordinators and new financial tools – on IDPs. In 2004, the Brookings Project on Internal Displacement and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) carried out a major research study that found significant shortcomings in international approaches to IDPs. Recommendations from the 2004 study, *Protect or Neglect: Toward a More Effective UN Approach to the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*, contributed to the 2005 humanitarian reform and also serves as a benchmark for assessing progress over the past decade.<sup>2</sup>

For this independent study, field research was carried out between July and September 2014 in three countries: Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia, all of which were included in the 2004 report.<sup>3</sup> Although all represent large-scale protracted displacement, these three cases are very different situations and the role of international actors is different in each of them. In addition, the researchers sought to assess the situation of IDPs in other countries – Syria, Pakistan, Kenya and Haiti – through desk research and telephone interviews. Although the full report is available online,<sup>4</sup> given its length (+200 pages), this short summary seeks to highlight some of the main findings and recommendations with a focus on recommendations primarily directed toward international agencies. Recommendations to national governments and other actors are, for the most part, included in the country case studies.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Costanza Adinolfi et al. “Main Recommendations” *Humanitarian Response Review*, August 2005: vi, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Diane Paul, and Simon Bagshaw. *Protect or Neglect? Toward a More Effective United Nations Approach to the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. Brookings Institution, 2004. [www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2004/11/23humanrights-bagshaw](http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2004/11/23humanrights-bagshaw).

<sup>3</sup> Nine countries were included in the 2004 report. These countries were: Russia, Somalia, Burundi, Liberia, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. The 2014 field studies were carried out by Jeff Drumtra (Somalia), Stacey White (DRC) and Elizabeth Ferris (Colombia). Elizabeth Ferris drafted the overall summary and conclusions of this study with the support of the other researchers and a range of stakeholders who also commented on earlier drafts. The introductory summary of the reports is available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/12/29-idp-status-introduction-ferris>. The Colombia report is available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/12/29-idp-colombia-displacement-ferris>. The DRC report is available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/12/29-idp-drc-displacement-white>. The Somalia report is available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/12/29-idp-somalia-displacement-drumtra>.

At the time this report is being completed, the humanitarian system is over-stretched in responding to large-scale humanitarian crises, including Ebola and other headline-generating emergencies in Syria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Iraq as well as those which have fallen off the front pages but which continue to challenge humanitarian actors, such as Darfur, Yemen, the Sahel, Gaza and Afghanistan. As one respondent characterized it, the humanitarian system is ‘creaking at the seams.’ At a time when the world is struggling with the enormity of unmet human need, it is important to underscore that improving humanitarian coordination can make a difference for IDPs while at the same time, recognizing the limits of humanitarian action.

As this study demonstrates, while progress has been made, at least in some areas, in improving the effectiveness of humanitarian *response* to IDPs, huge gaps remain in both protecting people from displacement and in finding solutions for the displaced. The number of IDPs displaced by conflict has increased in the past decade and has now reached an all-time high of over 33 million. As Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council recently remarked, “the dramatic increase in forced displacement in 2013 and the fact that the average amount of time people worldwide are living in displacement is now a staggering 17 years, all suggest that something is going terribly wrong in how we are responding and dealing with this issue.”<sup>5</sup>

Humanitarian actors are not responsible for either the growth in numbers of IDPs or for the fact that most IDPs live in long-term limbo largely because insecurity limits their prospects to return home or to integrate in another part of the country.

***This study focuses on how IDPs are faring, and specifically on how the international system is responding to IDPs, but there are far larger questions which must be addressed by political and development actors: how to prevent conflicts and how to manage post-conflict transitions. These largely unmet challenges will have a far greater impact on the lives of IDPs than international humanitarian actors.***

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. *Maintain the visibility of IDPs.*
2. *Always bear in mind that governments are – or should be – the key actor in preventing, responding to and resolving internal displacement*
3. *Consolidate progress in humanitarian reform*
4. *Prioritize finding solutions to displacement and the challenge of engaging development actors*
5. *Think boldly about protracted displacement.*
6. *Devote more resources and creativity to data-collection on IDPs to support policy and programming decisions*

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<sup>5</sup> “Annual report shows a record 33.3 million were internally displaced in 2013.” UNHCR, May 14, 2104, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/537334d0427.html>.

## ***In brief...***

### ***Progress has been made – particularly in recognizing the centrality of protection in humanitarian response.***

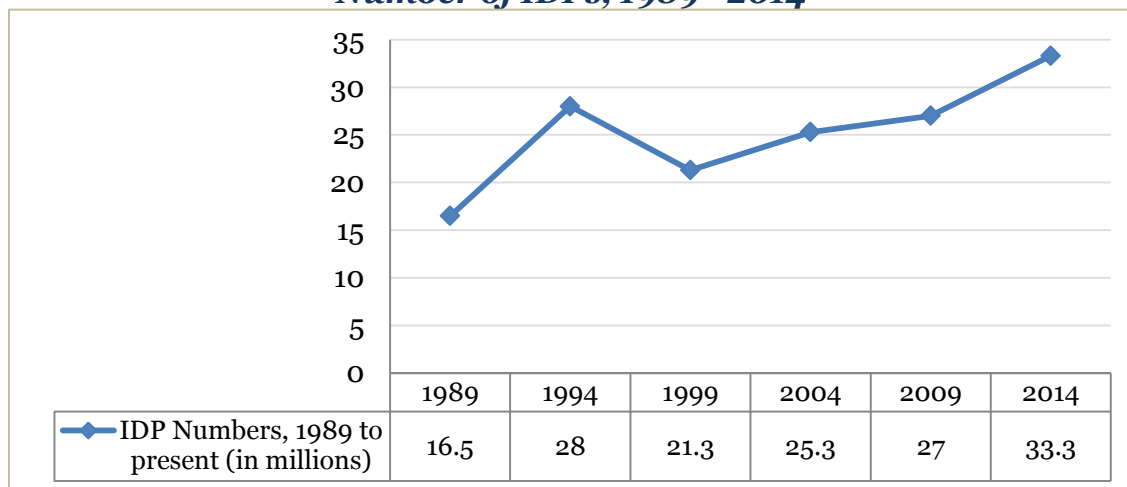
Much has happened in the ten years since the 2004 study – including the emergence of new conflicts as well as political changes in countries with large numbers of IDPs – making it difficult to assess the causes of improvements or deterioration in the well-being of IDPs. In Colombia, for example, there have been major advances in response to IDPs, most of which can be attributed to the efforts of the Colombian government and the path-breaking role of the Constitutional Court. Over the course of the past decade, Somalia has witnessed foreign military intervention, the emergence of al-Shabaab, a major famine, the deployment of peacekeeping troops and the halting steps of a new Federal Government in the country – all of which have affected displacement.

In spite of the difficulties in assessing causality, the international community has made significant progress in responding to IDPs' needs over the course of the past decade. Humanitarian reform has made a difference in improving the effectiveness of international response.

*...it is important to affirm that the overall international response to IDPs has improved over the past decade.*

Coordination mechanisms have been established where none existed. There is more awareness of the specific needs of IDPs by Humanitarian Coordinators and international agencies. In particular, there is much greater understanding that protection must be part of the humanitarian response for IDPs requiring not only the commitment of the mandated protection agencies, but all humanitarian organizations. Funding mechanisms have improved and the importance of funding protection is recognized. In comparison with the situation in 2004, there is more clarity today about which international agencies are responsible for IDPs. While the system is far from perfect and there are shortcomings and persistent problems, it is important to affirm that the overall international response to IDPs has improved over the past decade.

***Number of IDPs, 1989 - 2014<sup>6</sup>***



<sup>6</sup> Compiled from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2014.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Maintain the visibility of IDPs.**

Although there is now much greater awareness of protection than when *Protect or Neglect* was published, there are signs that internal displacement is slipping off the international agenda. There is a danger of losing progress made on IDPs over the past two decades. The trend toward mainstreaming, the decreasing visibility of IDPs on the international agenda, the decline in numbers of staff focusing explicitly on IDPs in international organizations such as UNHCR, OCHA, and ICRC and the weakening of the position of Special



*An IDP woman at a camp in North Kivu Province, DRC  
(UN Photo, Marie Frechon, February 16, 2008).*

Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs all raise alarm bells. Calls to protect IDPs are being replaced with references to ‘vulnerable groups,’ ‘civilians,’ and ‘affected communities.’ While clearly other groups – such as those unable to move or communities hosting IDPs – also have urgent needs, there is a danger that lumping IDPs in with the larger conflict-affected population makes them invisible and makes it less likely that measures will be taken to address the specific vulnerabilities associated with displacement, such as the need for shelter, protection, documentation, access to services, and solutions. While the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* remain an important normative framework, more effort is needed to strengthen regional instruments and to support the development of national laws and policies.

- 1.1 Leaders of both international humanitarian and development organizations should be more outspoken on issues of internal displacement, both globally and in particular country situations, especially where access to – and news reports of – IDPs are limited.
- 1.2 OCHA and the Emergency Relief Coordinator in particular should engage more systematically with the issue of IDPs, including highlighting their particular needs in statements and reports on protection of civilians and more systematically collecting and disseminating information on IDPs in hard-to-access areas, such as Syria.
- 1.3 The Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators should be asked to regularly report on the situation of IDPs in their countries, with a particular focus on protection concerns and on progress toward solutions.
- 1.4 Discussions are now needed with the UN secretariat and states about the establishment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on the human rights of IDPs which is properly staffed and funded in order to ensure that the position has the visibility and the capacity needed to play a catalytic role in advocating on behalf of IDPs. The establishment of such a position should complement enhanced efforts by all international agencies to develop programs and policies for IDPs.
- 1.5 The international community should continue to support the development of normative

frameworks, including support for implementation of the African Union Convention on Internal Displacement, for the development of other regional instruments in other parts of the world and for national governments to develop laws and policies on IDPs.

## **2. Always bear in mind that governments are – or should be – the key actor in preventing, responding to and resolving internal displacement**

National authorities are responsible for protecting and assisting those displaced within their borders. The *Framework for National Responsibility*<sup>7</sup> lays out twelve steps which governments can take to exercise their responsibility toward IDPs. Some governments have indeed taken important measures to address internal displacement while others try to ignore the fact that large numbers of people have fled their homes and still others are actively engaged in actions which are displacing people. While national authorities should be in the driver's seat in responding to IDPs, international agencies need to be more intentional about their roles vis-à-vis governments. Sometimes there is tension between efforts to support national authorities and to build their capacities while at the same time maintaining a critical independent perspective. The 'Rights up Front initiative' underscores the importance of responding early to human rights violations – including when the rights of IDPs are violated – even when doing so brings international actors into conflict with governments.

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2.1 There is no 'one size fits all' approach to international-governmental collaboration in humanitarian work beyond affirming the primary responsibility of national authorities for internal displacement. In some cases of weak governments, such as Somalia and DRC, the international humanitarian community largely substitutes for the government in provision of key services. While the UN always requires the consent of the government, there are also cases where other international actors have bypassed governments in order to respond to the needs of IDPs as in current cross-border operations in Syria and earlier operations in Eritrea, Cambodia and Burma. Even strong states – such as Colombia, Pakistan and Kenya – sometimes do not have the will or capacity to respond to displacement and need both the support and the critical perspectives brought by international actors. In some cases, such as Pakistan, clusters have enabled more effective advocacy toward the government while in other cases, such as Syria, advocacy on protection issues does not seem to be a priority for the cluster. The Global Protection Cluster has developed a useful template for developing a strategic approach to humanitarian response which could serve as the basis for further reflection on the roles of

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<sup>7</sup> Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *A Framework for National Responsibility*, 2005. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2005/04/national-responsibility-framework>.



international agencies vis-à-vis governments.<sup>8</sup> In developing the workplans of individual humanitarian agencies and in activating clusters, the issue of building national capacity should be central in countries whose governments are willing to exercise their responsibilities toward IDPs. In particular, strategies are needed to develop more supportive relationships by internationals vis-à-vis sub-national authorities, for honestly considering the delicate task of maintaining an independent critical perspective, and for working with civil society.

2.2 Existing coordination mechanisms (for example, the clusters and country teams) should grapple with some of the burning issues around IDP protection, such as the relationship between IDPs, vulnerable groups, and affected communities and particular issues emerging in specific contexts, as for example in Somalia the role of ‘gatekeepers’ in controlling relief distribution and in Colombia, the response to displacement caused by organized criminal groups.

2.3 The Global Protection Cluster should assess how these strategic reflections are going and make the necessary changes to ensure that the clusters are continually dealing with new challenges which come their way. It might be helpful, for example, to have a team of external consultants work with the clusters in developing these plans or to hold the cluster leads individually responsible for ensuring that this strategic review is carried out or to circulate these strategic plans between protection clusters for ‘peer review’ critique.



*Carrying whatever possessions they can, women arrive in a steady trickle at a camp for IDPs established next to a base of the African Union Mission for Somalia near Jowhar (UN Photo, Tobin Jones, November 12, 2013).*

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<sup>8</sup>Global Protection Cluster, *Framework for the establishment of a Protection Cluster strategy*  
[http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/tools\\_and\\_guidance/PC\\_Strategy\\_Templat\\_2012\\_EN.pdf](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/tools_and_guidance/PC_Strategy_Templat_2012_EN.pdf).

### 3. Consolidate progress in humanitarian reform

Overall, the processes of humanitarian reform have strengthened the capacity of the international humanitarian system to respond to the needs of IDPs. The main components of humanitarian reform -- the cluster approach, strengthening the role of humanitarian coordinators, and more flexible forms of funding (e.g. CERF) – are sound and need to be affirmed. The IASC should leave no room for doubt that it remains committed to these absolutely key components of humanitarian assistance and protection, and to their continued strengthening and improvement.

At the same time, measures should be taken to overcome some of the shortcomings identified in this study. Cluster systems at the country level must be prepared to respond rapidly and effectively to new emergencies, which includes having early warning systems and contingency planning in place in order to respond to crises as they develop. Given the protracted nature of displacement, some cluster systems at the country level have become accustomed to maintaining ongoing operations and have not responded deftly to new emergencies in-country – whether provision of humanitarian aid in DRC to response to famine in Somalia to the phenomenon of criminal violence-induced displacement in Colombia. For example, the study on Somalia – which no doubt applies to other countries as well – found that ‘humanitarian agencies have fallen into a dangerous habit of focusing on protracted assistance needs while ignoring emergency needs that are more dire and require a rapid priority response.’

As noted above, the Global Protection Cluster has developed a helpful framework for collectively reflecting on the big strategic questions facing clusters working in particular countries – assessing risks, identifying responsibilities, assessing capacities, and developing responses. This may be working well in some country situations, but could be more effectively used. In fact, this strategic approach is probably the most important task for the protection clusters. Rather than being a routine ‘box to tick,’ it should be prioritized as a dynamic, forward-looking process to guide the clusters and their members in their future work. In cases where humanitarian country teams have developed strategic plans for humanitarian response at the country level, reflections from the protection clusters should feed into these larger strategy documents.

While considerable resources have been devoted to training in the context of protection clusters, the record is less clear on the training by individual agencies and clusters on internal displacement. In some cases, such as OCHA, there are no training materials on IDPs and while training modules on IDPs have been developed by UNHCR, it is uncertain how many staff – including those deployed to situations of widespread internal displacement – have completed this training. While an IDP component is now included in training of Humanitarian Coordinators, some of the telephone interviews conducted for this study raise questions about the effectiveness of this approach.

Similarly, although the study found greater awareness of the need for protection in situations of internal displacement, serious gaps in the timely deployment of protection staff were reported, for example in Syria. And while there was appreciation for the work undertaken by ProCap staff,

*... serious gaps in the timely deployment of protection staff were reported.*

concern was expressed that these staff were in effect ‘letting UN agencies off the hook’ by allowing them to forego the necessary training and preparation of regular agency staff to work in IDP situations.

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While humanitarian reform has improved operational short-term response, it has had little effect on either protecting people from new displacement or in finding solutions for those displaced. Questions of access and staff security continue to be the major limitations in protecting and assisting IDPs. Addressing the causes of displacement and providing the security necessary for humanitarian access are not the responsibility of humanitarian actors, but they can support resilience and self-protection strategies by IDPs themselves. Too few international efforts are devoted to this<sup>9</sup> and yet engaging more directly with IDP communities is in line with the key objectives of the Transformative Agenda.

- 3.1 The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) should reaffirm its commitment to the three essential components of humanitarian reform in 2015, 10 years after the original adoption of the reforms. In particular, the IASC should affirm and emphasize that the principal role of the cluster system is to ensure a timely, predictable and accountable response to *new emergencies*.
- 3.2 The Protection Clusters should ensure needed staffing, particularly full-time dedicated cluster coordinators, and training for cluster members, including on internal displacement. In addition, international agencies should ensure that staff working in situations of internal displacement receive training on both the particular vulnerabilities of IDPs and the basic principles of IDP normative frameworks.
- 3.3 Humanitarian actors, particularly through the protection clusters, should do more to understand how IDPs protect themselves when states cannot do so, including when international actors are not present, and do more to support their autonomy, resilience, self-protection and self-reliance strategies. This could be included in the strategic reflections referenced in the recommendations regarding protection clusters above.
- 3.4 Much greater attention is needed by almost all actors to IDPs dispersed with host families. While the increased awareness of IDPs living outside of camps is commendable, there is still a paucity of knowledge on best practices of responding to their particular needs and the families/communities that host them.

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<sup>9</sup> See for example, the Local to Global Protection initiative: <http://www.local2global.info/>.



#### 4. Prioritize finding solutions to displacement and the challenge of engaging development actors

While the most important humanitarian policy advance of the last decade has been the remarkable evolution of protection, the issue for the coming decade is about the protracted nature of displacement, the need to develop effective ways of engaging development actors, redoubling the search for durable solutions, and working much more intentionally on the issue of ‘transitions.’ Specifically, the most important IDP protection challenge in the coming years is bridging the much-lamented relief-to-development gap. In spite of decades of repeated calls for increased engagement of development actors, the relief-to-development gap remains a glaringly apparent problem that is simply unacceptable in view of the long-term hardship it imposes on beneficiary populations and the fact that the gap is entirely the creation of an international system that aids and abets a wide separation between relief actors and humanitarian organizations. There have been many efforts to bridge this gap over the years. To cite but one recent example, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs made this one of his two main priorities in December 2012 and yet there is no discernible sign that development and humanitarian actors are working together more effectively in situations of protracted displacement. On the contrary, the dysfunctional gap between relief and development programs has gained a strange acceptance over the years as a frustratingly predictable, consistent, vaguely unfortunate but normal practice.

*The dysfunctional gap between relief and development programs has gained a strange acceptance over the years...*

Humanitarian reform has had little effect on finding solutions for IDPs. Although the protracted nature of displacement is widely lamented, there seems to be a paucity of creative thinking in coming up with ways for development and humanitarian actors to work together to find solutions. There have been many efforts over the last five years – Transitional Solutions Initiative, the Secretary-General’s Framework for Solutions, the Solutions Alliance, the Early Recovery Cluster – not to mention efforts dating back to ICARA II in the mid-1980s. Not only have none of these initiatives yielded substantive improvements but there has been little accountability for their failure.

The single biggest failing of the cluster system is the Early Recovery cluster. There is an urgent need to clarify its status, both at the global level and at the field level. In none of the three countries studied, Somalia, Colombia, and DRC, was the Early Recovery cluster active despite obvious opportunities for early recovery programs. Either the IASC should make a fresh commitment to making the Early Recovery cluster function as it should, or a new system should be installed in its place. UNDP should be held accountable for the widespread failures of the Early Recovery cluster and the IASC should take action to make the necessary changes to ensure that this necessary task is being addressed. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the IASC to make sure that cluster leads are upholding their responsibilities. Until that happens, the closure of desperately needed nutrition programs and health clinics after relief operations cease, the degradation of emergency water systems after humanitarian organizations leave, and the collapse of shelter/housing programs after the emergency passes will continue to be the fault not of combatants or natural disasters, but of humanitarian and development policy makers, as well as the donors who fund such a system.

Although this study has not focused on the role of donors, the World Bank, the regional development banks and other development actors – such as UN Habitat, UN Women, and the UN Population Fund – these actors also should be pressed to become more effectively involved in resolving displacement. The reality is that many of the issues limiting durable solutions for IDPs are development issues – such as re-establishment of livelihoods and rule of law – rather than humanitarian ones. The expertise needed to respond to a displacement crisis is not the same as to restore livelihoods, deal with land claims, and carry out urban planning. It simply does not make sense for humanitarian agencies to devote scarce resources to building expertise in areas where development actors already possess years of experience and good practices. National development plans need to address internal displacement and allocate funds for durable solutions.

Although the IASC has adopted the *Framework for Durable Solutions*<sup>10</sup> which provides a comprehensive tool for determining solutions, this framework does not yet serve as a practical tool for most governments. Further work is needed to provide guidance to governments and international actors alike on how to adapt the framework to specific national contexts.

In the absence of the engagement of development actors, humanitarians are often faced with the need to work with IDPs for years and yet are restricted in planning the efficient use of resources for more than a one-year funding cycle. Indeed, one of the impediments to long-term planning and action in protracted situations is the short-term funding cycle of donor governments. Providing funding on an annual basis encourages short-term programming (usually some form of ‘care and maintenance’ operations) rather than the longer-term action needed to support solutions to displacement. Some donors have begun to change this timeframe and this should be encouraged.

4.1 The IASC should evaluate the Early Recovery cluster, hold UNDP accountable for its performance, consider whether it can be strengthened and, if not, rapidly establish another modality for ensuring a transition from humanitarian response to development action.

4.2 The UN Secretary-General should also hold the Early Recovery Cluster accountable for progress in implementing his 2011 Policy Decision<sup>11</sup> on Durable Solutions which instructed Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, with the support for the Early Recovery Cluster and UNHCR, to develop strategies for durable solutions for internally displaced people.

4.3 Development actors, such as the World Bank Group and the UN Development Group, should develop tangible policies to support solutions for internal displacement and consider ways in which pilot projects, such as those included in the Solutions Alliance and those undertaken by the World Bank, can be scaled up.

4.4 Protection clusters should convene meetings with government officials, development actors and (where they exist) early recovery clusters to review the *Framework for Durable Solutions* and adapt and operationalize it to the particular context so that it

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2010/04/durable-solutions>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1265299949041/6766328-1265299960363/SG-Decision-Memo-Durable-Solutions.pdf>.

serves as an effective tool for finding solutions. This should form an integral part of strategic planning.

4.5 Donor agencies should be encouraged to make funding decisions for humanitarian programs on three year cycles unless and until development actors are active in long-term displacement situations.

## **5. Think boldly about protracted displacement.**

It is the responsibility of national authorities to establish conditions and support the means for IDPs to find durable solutions to their displacement. And yet the dominant characteristic of internal displacement in 2014 is its protracted nature. Solutions simply aren't being found and national governments seem unwilling or unable to take the lead in resolving displacement.

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*...the time has come for more radical thinking.*

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This study found a certain complacency, inertia, and tiredness in international response to long-standing IDP situations. Given the impact of protracted crises on the ability of the humanitarian system to respond to new emergencies and the failure over the past 25 years of effective humanitarian-development collaboration to find solutions for protracted displacement, the time has come for more radical thinking. Perhaps a UN resolution is needed to set time limits for humanitarian actors after which point development agencies would be expected (and held accountable) for taking over. Or perhaps it is time to establish a new UN agency for 'transitions' – perhaps a hybrid organization including staff from humanitarian, development and peacebuilding agencies charged with supporting transitions and finding solutions. Or perhaps it is time for the UN to organize a global effort – such as World Refugee Year in 1960 -- to end protracted displacement for the millions of IDPs and refugees who have been displaced for more than a decade. Or perhaps regional initiatives – à la CIREFCA (the International Conference on Central American Refugees) or the Comprehensive Plan of Action – should be organized in which a variety of partners (national governments, international actors, civil society) are mobilized to do their parts to find durable solutions for those suffering the effects of protracted displacement. These ideas would all require a massive investment of time, energy and funding – and yet the costs of continuing to devote most of the world's humanitarian resources, year after year, to assisting those in protracted displacement are very high.

In the absence of solutions and the protracted nature of conflicts, in recent years, 'Stay and deliver' has been the admirable policy guiding humanitarian action in on-going conflict situations. The "stay and deliver" policy emphasizes the importance of finding ways to continue humanitarian programs and to avoid closing programs and evacuating staff when the security risks are deemed too severe. It is a noble policy that has been pursued in difficult countries such as DRC and Somalia. However, the practice comes at an operational cost, particularly when extended over many years. Deciding to 'stay' has sometimes compromised the standards used in delivering assistance, leading to situations with weak program management, poor program

monitoring, and deliberately false or inaccurate reporting about program results. Discussion of these operational compromises is sensitive but necessary, particularly in light of the review of UN operations in Sri Lanka, in order to ensure accountability for the humanitarian decisions and compromises being made to continue operations. There is a fundamental tension between the “humanitarian imperative” on the one hand and “humanitarian standards” on the other which was particularly highlighted in the case study on Somalia, but certainly applies more broadly. Given the difficulties of carrying out humanitarian operations in situations of open conflict, a balance between the two is probably the only way forward. Yet there needs to be a regular opportunity or mechanisms for humanitarian actors to step back and reflect on whether particular humanitarian programs should be continued.



*Mother and child from Mosul at a displacement site in Koysinjaq, Iraq (IOM, Taryn Fivek, September 15, 2014).*

5.1 The Global Protection Cluster, the IASC, UNHCR and OCHA (particularly in planning the World Humanitarian Summit) together with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs are encouraged to create forums and devote energy to thinking boldly about actions needed to address protracted displacement. And the Secretary-General should provide momentum and leadership to implementing his 2011 framework for ending displacement.

5.2 In countries where prevailing insecurity means that operations cannot be adequately monitored, regular discussions should be held between the protection cluster, the humanitarian coordinator, and senior officials from headquarters of humanitarian agencies (perhaps UNHCR and OCHA) to assess whether humanitarian action should continue.

5.3 The international humanitarian system, including donor governments, should undertake a specially focused examination of how the cluster approach can function – or should function – in situations that pose exceptionally high security risks and limited humanitarian access, such as in present-day Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. The Global Protection Cluster should consider setting up a mechanism to ensure accountability for humanitarian decisions to continue operations in risky settings where standards must be compromised.

## 6. Devote more resources and creativity to data-collection on IDPs to support policy and programming decisions

Counting IDPs and assessing their needs and capacities is an inherently difficult task, particularly in urban settings where even identifying IDPs is a challenging undertaking. But the lack of accurate data – on numbers, demographic characteristics, needs and intentions – limits the ability of governments and international responders to tailor suitable programs for them. It also limits our understanding of displacement trends and dynamics.

This study has found, for example, that it is impossible to assess whether IDPs are better off through comparison of objective indicators over a

ten-year period – e.g. poverty, protection, health, livelihoods. This is due to the lack of basic data – as well as of disaggregated data by gender and age. There are inconsistencies in the way data is collected which are related to conceptual differences in definition (for example, are children of IDPs counted as IDPs? How are secondary and multiple displacements counted?) There are difficulties in monitoring displacement over time as well as gaps in the types of data collected by national governments and a range of international organizations who carry out assessments at different times and for different purposes. Too often this information is not made publicly available, leading to both a paucity of timely information and to duplication of data-collection efforts. While there are exciting new technologies which offer hope for more accurate data-collection, further work is equally essential (though perhaps less-exciting) on how the data will be disseminated and used, especially by governments of affected countries.



*Representatives from the International Organization for Migration conduct registration for IDPs at in Bangui, CAR. (IOM, Sandra Black, March 2, 2014.*

6.1 National governments and international agencies should review their existing methods of collecting data on IDPs and consider ways of improving these methodologies. This could include:

- Working with governments to gather data on the situation of IDPs as part of their standard data mechanisms, including censuses and population surveys;
- Working with research institutions and specialized agencies to develop tools and gather data on forecasting displacement
- Working with the private sector to use technology, such as satellite imagery, cellphone data usage, etc. to gather data on displacement with a view to understanding trends and dynamics of displacement.

6.2 In designing data collection methodologies and technologies, specialized agencies such as the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service should work with the end-users of this data – national and local authorities and international humanitarian and development actors to ensure that the data collected is what is needed to promote both protection of and solutions for IDPs.



## *Whetting the appetite: Somalia, DRC, and Colombia*

While each of the case studies presents a comprehensive overview of conflicts in the three countries as well as an assessment of the shortcomings and accomplishments of international actors, the following summaries focus on the recommendations coming out of the case studies. These short summaries are intended to whet the appetite of readers who will hopefully engage with the much more substantive analysis presented in the case studies.

### **SOMALIA**

Somalia is the setting of one of the world's longest continuous humanitarian assistance operations, dating back to the late-1980s. Many defining characteristics of the international humanitarian response in Somalia – extremely dangerous conditions, deliberate targeting of aid workers, terrorist threats, protracted population displacement mixed with new rounds of population upheavals, fragmentation of government authority, failed or problematic peacekeeping operations, remote programming – have unfortunately become more common in humanitarian operations around the world by 2014. The number of IDPs in Somalia has tripled over the past decade and is now estimated at 1.1 million people.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia in 2014 is harsh, dangerous, highly vulnerable, operationally fragile, loosely monitored, susceptible to manipulation, and underfunded. The particular challenges for humanitarians include:

- Dealing with fragmented government which has developed good policies – on paper – but which lack possibilities for effective implementation.
- Working in an extremely dangerous operational environment
- Dealing with humanitarian ambivalence and low expectations which surfaces in at least four ways:
  - Ambivalence about the proper balance between staff security and quality programming
  - Ambivalence about humanitarian effectiveness against overwhelming odds
  - Ambivalence about the new national government
  - Ambivalence about the integrity of humanitarian efforts
- Working in a context where humanitarian assistance is not neutral and where the UN's alignment between humanitarian programs and political-military activities is uncomfortable for relief organizations but is an immutable condition of humanitarian work.

The UN hierarchy is more aware and engaged on population displacement issues in Somalia than was the case ten years ago although the fact that UN agencies are split between Mogadishu and Nairobi is a thorn in the side for many. While the cluster system is functioning, there is a sense that humanitarian agencies have fallen into a dangerous habit of focusing on Somalia's protracted assistance needs while responding slowly to emergency needs that are more dire and require a rapid priority response. The protection cluster has suffered from discontinuity in

leadership, but it is important to emphasize that the impact of protection efforts in Somalia is incremental at best. Major challenges include addressing aid diversion and gatekeepers as well as coping with shifting IDP populations given trends in evictions, relocation and returns. Other areas needing continual attention are gender-based violence and child protection as well as developing humanitarian linkages with long-term development initiatives, as is currently being piloted by the Solutions Alliance. Humanitarian leaders express optimism that the Somali government's New Deal initiative, which emphasizes stabilization and long-term development goals, will provide a vehicle for more effective coordination between relief agencies and development experts.



*A Somali man rests on a bag of food aid  
(UN Photo, Tobin Jones, November 12, 2013).*

In terms of funding, Somalia has received 65 percent of the funds requested for the country in recent years through the Consolidated Appeal and/or Strategic Response Plan. While Somalia is not quite the “abandoned step-child” of the humanitarian system that some claim it to be, the struggle for adequate funding has intensified noticeably in recent years.

### **Recommendations specific to Somalia**

1. International humanitarian staff, particularly the staff members of cluster lead agencies, should continue to return to Mogadishu as rapidly as permitted by forward-leaning security analyses. Cluster discussions and decisions should shift from Nairobi to Mogadishu.
2. International NGOs should collaborate more closely with the UN's Risk Management Unit which assesses the risk of corruption before contracts are signed with local companies and organizations.
3. Humanitarian agencies, working together in close coordination under the Humanitarian Coordinator, should place a high priority on creation of a realistic relocation plan that protects IDPs from arbitrary evictions and exploitation while addressing legitimate desires of the Somali government to rationalize the chaotic IDP settlements of Mogadishu. Donors should be prepared to support this effort.
4. UNHCR should, as a matter of highest priority, install a full-time dedicated coordinator for the protection cluster. The coordinator should be based in Mogadishu as early as possible.

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

For over two decades, large numbers of people in DRC have been displaced from their homes, often repeatedly, as a result of persistent conflict. The waves of violence have been so chronic over the years that displacement has touched nearly every inhabitant living in the eastern provinces. Although figures have fluctuated, the number of IDPs has generally hovered around the two million mark for over a decade, with an estimated 2.6 million displaced in 2014 – most of whom do not live in settlements but are dispersed among the local population.



*An IDP woman at Bompata Encampment in DRC  
(UN Photo, Marie Frechon, March 11, 2007).*

There is no doubt that the continual presence of international organizations in DRC over the last decade has helped to save lives and alleviate suffering. Unfortunately, results of the long-term international efforts in the country have failed to progress beyond the narrowest of humanitarian objectives, and even then, the emergency response has never been able to adequately address the vast needs of war-affected populations. Despite a constant presence in the country for years, humanitarian interventions have often been inconsistent and too meager to tackle the immense and diverse needs of vulnerable groups in DRC and not sufficiently agile to provide truly rapid emergency assistance for the newly displaced.

International military and political efforts to bring an end to the conflict have also had their share of impediments as well. After some 15 years of deployment under the auspices of a progressively reinforced mandate, the UN peacekeeping forces of MONUSCO (formerly MONUC) have been only partially successful in neutralizing the multiple armed factions party to the conflict and have struggled to effectively protect the millions of civilians caught in the crossfire.

The potential for renewed fighting and new displacements is not the only humanitarian concern on the table. A lack of vision and funding for the kinds of activities best suited to assist people in a situation of protracted displacement are also preoccupying. There are no durable solutions for IDPs in camps and the situation for the majority of IDPs who live dispersed with host families have never been closely tracked by the international community. The government has long been criticized for lacking the technical capacity, the financial resources, and the political will to address the needs of the chronically displaced in the country although since 2009 it has worked to implement a *Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan* in conflict-affected areas. Although the government has taken some steps to improve stability and civilian protection and has established national structures for response to IDPs, current efforts are far from adequate.

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*As in Somalia, there is no question that the integrated mission in DRC has diminished perceptions of impartiality of humanitarian action.*

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As in Somalia, there is no question that the integrated mission in DRC has diminished perceptions of impartiality of humanitarian action. Since 2004, annual funding for humanitarian activities has ranged from an estimated USD 225 million to USD 740 million but a sharp decrease in donor contributions in 2014 has been a cause of serious concern in DRC.

Year after year, international efforts have concentrated on short-term aid delivery with only recent efforts to look at transitions. Cluster coordination has offered greater visibility on sector-specific issues, a common platform for advocacy vis-à-vis government, non-government, and MONUSCO representatives, and a forum for information exchange and standard setting. International assistance in DRC remains overwhelmingly concentrated on IDPs living in camps, in part, some say, because these people are the most visible and easiest to access. During the course of its longstanding engagement in DRC, the international community has done little to build the autonomy of IDPs living in a constant state of insecurity. At the same time, it has been unable to transition towards durable solutions for IDPs given the protracted conflict and the consequent absence of development actors. As a result, IDPs remain as vulnerable and aid-dependent today as they were a decade ago. In the context of the protracted crisis, the international community finds itself in a “no-man’s land,” neither operating in a traditional emergency context nor moving towards a more transitional setting wherein development actors could take over. Certainly, humanitarian actions need to be re-energized and improved to better address new shocks and displacements.

### **Recommendations specific to DRC**

1. Core emergency response functions to address new displacements should be re-energized and improved through greater international staff presence in the field, more rapid communications alerts, and more nimble funding mechanisms.
2. In order to reinforce humanitarian space, more high-level support to the Humanitarian Coordinator role should be considered, for example, by naming a high-level deputy to focus on humanitarian issues, perhaps based in Goma.
3. Response to IDPs should be diversified beyond provision of emergency relief to include resilience-building, support for indigenous coping strategies.
4. An intensive advocacy campaign should be launched to create a common understanding and approach to durable solutions for IDPs with the national government, MONUSCO, humanitarian actors and multilateral development organizations.
5. More robust pressure should be applied on the government and national actors to satisfy their responsibilities for the protection and assistance of IDPs in all phases of displacement.

## COLOMBIA

Colombia is a country of paradoxes. While the number of IDPs has increased from 2 million in 2004 to over 6 million in 2014 (and currently ranks second only to Syria in the scale of displacement), the government has taken impressive steps not only to address the needs of IDPs but to bring an end to the long conflict with guerrilla groups. The government has developed perhaps the world's most comprehensive legal system for IDPs, the constitutional court has played an impressively assertive role in protecting IDPs and civil society organizations in Colombia are among the world's strongest. However, there are parts of the country, including parts of major urban centers, that are inaccessible to humanitarian actors and to the state. Criminal gangs, paramilitaries, *narcotráfico* groups, cartels, guerrillas, and other non-state actors have become the major drivers of displacement and present particular challenges to humanitarian actors. Displacement within cities, for example, is increasing as a result of violence committed by gangs and other non-state actors.



*A Colombian internally displaced child  
(Save the Children, November 30, 2012).*

Colombia presents a paradox for the international community as well. International humanitarian agencies have been present in Colombia for decades where they have ambitious programs and deploy hundreds of staff. But, unlike other cases of massive displacement where the role of the international community is to provide assistance to IDPs – and often to substitute for the state – Colombia has a strong state and the role of the internationals is to support the government. On a conceptual level, the relationship between international actors and a strong state is difficult with an inherent tension between supporting the government and carrying out independent humanitarian work. The government presently spends about USD 1 billion per year, dwarfing international annual contributions of around USD 60 million.

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*Overall IDPs are better off in Colombia than they were ten years ago—but this is largely due to a major court decision in 2004 which compelled a more robust state response.*

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The case study concluded that overall IDPs are better off in Colombia than they were ten years ago—but this is largely due to a major court decision in 2004 which compelled a more robust state response. IDPs are now formally recognized by law as victims of the armed conflict and entitled to reparations. In the process of developing policies for victims, however, the particular vulnerabilities associated with internal displacement are becoming less visible.

Humanitarian reform and clusters may have improved coordination by international actors in some areas (although existing sectoral coordination generally functioned well back in 2004).



Except for the World Food Program and a fairly limited ICRC assistance program, international humanitarian agencies do not provide direct assistance to IDPs.

While IDPs are better off in terms of assistance, there are still major shortcomings in prevention, protection and solutions. Solutions depend on security (which is becoming more complex with the proliferation of armed actors) and often complex processes around land and tenure in either the home community or in communities where IDPs live. While national laws, policies and institutions are well-developed, there is a universally-acknowledged gap at the municipal/provincial level where lack of political will, financial resources, management capacity and, in some cases, corruption, limit the implementation of these laws and policies. It is also likely that issues around security sector reform will have a major impact on solutions for IDPs – an area in which humanitarian actors have been only marginally involved. While all attention – by government, international actors, civil society, IDPs/victims – is now focused on the peace process, violence may actually increase – at least in the short term – after the signing of the peace agreement. The Colombian government understandably wants to close the displacement file and is committing significant resources to support victims, including IDPs, to find solutions.

### **Recommendations specific to Colombia:**

1. International and Colombian humanitarian and development actors should engage more intentionally with the military/police and broader issues of security sector reform to ensure that such efforts support solutions to displacement.
2. Both international and Colombian humanitarian and development actors should prioritize engagement with municipal authorities in supporting solutions to displacement and consider solutions other than return.
3. In light of the landmark law on restitution of land, the government's Unidad de Víctimas (perhaps in association with an international agency) should devote attention to assessing the relationship between victimhood, displacement, and vulnerability to ensure that programs established to assist victims address the particular needs of displaced and other vulnerable groups.
4. Both international and Colombian development agencies should review current development plans, policies and strategies not only through a 'post-conflict' lens but also from the perspective of their ability to support solutions to displacement.
5. The international community should review the present weaknesses in the protection and early recovery clusters and, if they are found not to add value to existing coordination mechanisms, consider finding alternatives.
6. The international community should use existing strategic planning processes to discuss the role of international actors in both supporting and maintaining an independent critical perspective vis à vis the government.

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