

An aerial photograph of a vast, dry riverbed. The landscape is a mix of light brown sand and dark, winding channels of water. In the foreground, a person wearing a red jacket and a white hat stands on the sand, providing a sense of scale. In the background, a line of trees and some structures are visible under a clear blue sky.

Building on the momentum

**IDMC's commitment to carry forward
recommendations by the UN Secretary
General's High-Level Panel on Internal
Displacement**

When the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, announced the establishment of a High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement in October 2019, the challenges ahead were daunting and expectations high. With steadily rising numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) around the world, the need to address this global issue collectively and with urgency had become evident. The panel's [terms of reference](#), which called for “innovative and concrete solutions for IDPs and tangible changes on the ground”, set the bar high for it to start its work in February 2020.

The collective effort of governments, policy makers, donors and practitioners rallying around an issue long considered marginal shows what can be achieved with the right focus, dedication and resources. The panel's work has been supported and its analysis shaped by the contributions of hundreds of stakeholders who sent written submissions and shared their ideas in person and online. Importantly, despite the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, these included the perspectives of IDPs and host communities themselves. The uniqueness and inclusiveness of the process has been recognised and appreciated by many.

The panel submitted its report to the Secretary-General on the sidelines of the UN general assembly in New York on 29 September 2021. It makes a range of recommendations to the Secretary-General himself, the UN system, governments, international and national NGOs, the private sector and the media. If implemented, some could help to bring about real change on the ground. By proposing ways to reduce both the scale and risk of internal displacement worldwide and by putting the focus explicitly on solutions,

the report has the potential to transform the way the issue is tackled over the coming decade.

Follow-up over the next few weeks will be critical. The report is a foundation upon which we must all build together. We must ensure that the unprecedented political momentum that gave birth to the process is nurtured and maintained. IDMC offers reflections here on the report's key takeaways and priority areas for action.

Government leadership and political will

The starting point of the process was an unambiguous reaffirmation of the primary responsibility of states to prevent displacement and assist IDPs in meeting their needs and achieving permanent solutions. With this came the ambition to find new ways of generating and sustaining political will, both nationally and internationally, and the recognition that without it progress would be limited and concrete outcomes on the ground few.

With this red thread throughout, the report reiterates that governments must treat internal displacement as a matter of priority and mobilise their entire institutional apparatus to address it. The panel recommends it feature prominently in local and national development plans to ensure coherence, adequate financing and regular monitoring, supported by country-level coordination mechanisms that pull together the mandates and budgets of line ministries and government agencies.

The report also considers ways of catalysing political will by finding a balance between positive incentives and accountability. It suggests the prospect of accessing new resources,



building new partnerships and becoming a model for others can act as powerful motivations for governments, but that accountability must also be promoted through strong national judicial systems, organised civil societies and sustained public pressure.

We welcome this focus on political will and the report's attempt to draw from examples of countries where sheer will and determined leadership led to significant progress, whether through the signing of peace agreements or the development of dedicated legal frameworks as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sierra Leone and Uganda, the effective integration of displacement into local government plans and priorities as in Honduras or government-led multi-stakeholder initiatives on durable solutions as in Somalia.

Another promising recommendation is the call to multiply spaces for peer-to-peer exchange between states and create new opportunities for dialogue and learning. There has been no formal or predictable platform for state-to-state engagement on internal displacement to date. Instead, it has tended to happen ad hoc, often within the same group of like-minded countries. We believe the political momentum that gave rise to the panel itself is the result of increased openness and exchange on this issue and reflects a growing appetite among states to learn from the methods, successes and failures of others.

Such recommendations are relevant and timely, but we regret that the report does not offer more analysis of how existing platforms such as regional organisations, south-south cooperation initiatives and think tanks could facilitate such dialogue, and what could be learned from their design and modus operandi. This could have helped to develop guidance on best practice and roadmaps, and to provide more insight into the institutions, processes and resources required.

The country examples used offer interesting insights, but they too would have benefited from more in-depth analysis of the political context in which the initiatives took place, the enabling factors that made them possible and what it took to mobilise the right level of political and financial

support. A deeper political economy analysis of how leadership and accountability can be generated when governments are dealing with multiple and competing priorities, or when they have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, would also have been welcome.

Achieving durable solutions

It is encouraging to see the panel reiterate the many protracted effects of internal displacement on local communities and its implications for countries' long-term development and stability. We welcome the call for a more equal balance between the responsibilities of the humanitarian and development sectors, and for new ways to engage and leverage the specific skills and resources of the development sector.

We are also pleased that the report considers the three traditional options for durable solutions – return, local integration and settlement elsewhere – in a slightly different light. In situations where persistent insecurity or environmental degradation make return seem undesirable or impractical, IDPs consulted by the panel expressed a strong preference for the latter options.

This concurs with some of our recent research findings in Ethiopia, where people displaced from areas affected by drought no longer consider their areas of origin habitable and see local integration as the only feasible option to access services and livelihoods. These are important findings that should guide government policy and inform tailored responses.

The pursuit of sustainable solutions comes with a recommendation to formalise the role of Resident Coordinators (RCs) to lead UN efforts at the country level, including by incorporating associated responsibilities into their terms of reference and performance assessments. The report also recommends incorporating solutions into UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and associated processes with a view to articulating collective outcomes.

This reaffirmation of RCs' responsibilities includes a call for more predictable support, both technical and financial. We believe these recommendations will be essential in improving coordination among UN organisations but also, importantly, for aligning international efforts with government plans and priorities and supporting national ownership and leadership.

These recommendations represent important steps in shifting the centre of responsibility away from the humanitarian community and engaging with development stakeholders, in particular governments, more systematically. The report offers a few examples of promising private-sector initiatives from Kenya, the Philippines and Uganda, and multi-stakeholder financing partnerships involving international financial institutions, but more lessons and examples of best practice from nexus programming or public-private partnerships that were successful in bringing about lasting changes to protracted displacement would have helped to develop more concrete guidance and a clearer sense of roles and responsibilities.

Building ownership and tracking progress

An important addition to the report's recommendations on political will is its dedicated section on data and evidence, which are considered beyond the benefits they bring in terms of understanding and raising awareness of the scale, patterns and impacts of internal displacement. By providing a measure of future risk and the costs of inaction, data and evidence are recognised as catalysts for increasing attention, generating national ownership and buy-in, and mobilising new sources of political, financial and technical support.

It is encouraging to see the panel's positive assessment of existing government-led processes and systems to collect, analyse and manage displacement data, and how these have supported integrated planning, budgeting and progress monitoring across different technical and policy sectors. We very much support the idea of learning from the experiences of countries such as Colombia, Indonesia, Japan, Mali and the Philippines, where centralised platforms for

data analysis have led to enhanced collaboration between governments and their partners, more coordinated efforts to strengthen capacity and expertise, and more predictable and effective operational responses.

We particularly welcome the recommendations to make better use of the skills and resources of national and international data partners, and to support the work of the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS) as a key resource and coordination platform. Dedicated working groups are also essential if coordination and data interoperability across the humanitarian, development, peace and disaster/climate sectors is to be improved, and the development of country-specific and government-led data strategies around which partners and donors can rally is to be supported. This is very much in line with our own vision of sustainable and integrated systems for evidence-based policy and planning.

Addressing financing gaps

The report rightly points to gaps in predictable financing for solutions from international donors. It recognises that development financing does not address internal displacement specifically, which leaves states and partners on the ground over-reliant on short-term humanitarian grants and struggling to embrace longer-term programming. The panel calls for an adjustment of existing financing mechanisms and for the more systematic use of internal displacement indicators, or "markers", in development plans and priorities.

The recommendation to establish a Global Fund on Internal Displacement Solutions is a welcome contribution to filling these gaps. It is proposed as a way of inducing an injection of funds for government-led strategies and plans, following the models of initiatives such as the Global Fund on AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global Partnership for Education and the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents.

We very much support the idea of a fund that equips governments with the right financial and technical resources to develop and implement dedicated strategies for internal displacement

solutions. Such a fund would help to create new livelihood opportunities and offer pathways out of dependency while strengthening public systems and services to reduce reliance on international aid. Importantly, this would place governments in the driving seat and allow them to spearhead a common vision in partnership with international, private sector and civil society stakeholders.

The fact that clear conditions and eligibility criteria would be attached to the funding, with grants subjected to a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system and mutually agreed results systematically tracked, is also encouraging. It would offer the possibility of developing a collaborative way of measuring progress and assessing and sharing good practice and create a platform for peer-to-peer learning and exchange.

The fund may not be applicable in all situations, but it could help to kickstart a new way of working in countries that host long-standing displaced populations and where the government has shown willingness to take action. It would also help to ensure over time that humanitarian aid is preserved for the crises where it is most needed.

Recognising the global nature of internal displacement

The recognition of disasters and climate change as drivers of internal displacement is timely and very welcome, and the report rightly highlights the opportunities that disaster preparedness and early warning present to reduce the scale and negative impacts of the phenomenon. That said, it relegates disaster displacement for the most part to the sections on prevention and risk reduction, which is likely to reinforce the mistaken notion that it is rarely if ever protracted and that it requires less political will and fewer sustained investments in durable solutions than displacement triggered by conflict and violence.

The report calls for increased efforts by states to address displacement risk as part of their disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies. However, its focus on risk assessments, early warning and anticipatory financing

risks consigning the issue to the realm of technical solutions rather than highlighting the need to better integrate it into larger national planning and policy processes and multilateral frameworks such as the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. Also, a fuller treatment of the importance of risk reduction and anticipatory action, through climate change adaptation and building back better for sustainable development, and the opportunities they offer to engage development stakeholders in addressing internal displacement, would have been welcome.

Most importantly, by treating conflict and disaster displacement so differently, the report does not fully highlight the global nature of the overall phenomenon and the fact that almost every country in the world needs to address it. In doing so, it misses a major opportunity for solidarity and joint learning. Were all countries to recognise displacement within their own borders, the tone, format and content of the global conversation would be radically different. A space could be created for open and real exchange beyond forums led by UN agencies and donor countries, which in turn has the potential to encourage more countries to join and lead the conversation.

This is our vision for a truly global agenda on internal displacement, which we will continue working toward in the coming years.



What next?

We believe the panel's report provides a strong foundation for future work, and we hope the stakeholders involved in the process will analyse its recommendations in detail and agree concrete plans for follow-up rapidly. We stand ready to contribute in at least three ways.

01. Continuing to provide a global measure of displacement

We will continue to curate and analyse all relevant data to publish annual global estimates of the number of people displaced or at risk of displacement across more than 200 countries and territories. We believe that painting a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon worldwide will become more relevant than ever as a foundation for action and tracking progress over the coming decades.

We will build on our Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) and the data we make available through our open-source database by analysing durable solutions in ways that are relevant both to policymakers and on the ground, assessing the socioeconomic costs of displacement and providing insights into its differentiated impacts on specific population groups and patterns of displacement associated with slow-onset disasters. We will continue to provide this information as a public good to all our partners, including governments, UN agencies, civil society and media.

We are also pleased to be able to provide a comparative global measure of countries' progress in reducing the scale, impacts and risk of displacement. Our Internal Displacement Index (IDI) assesses the political, socioeconomic, environmental and security contexts in which displacement takes place, and tracks government investments in data collection, policy development and action. As such, we believe it will serve as a useful yardstick to measure implementation of some of the panel's recommendations, and as a means of developing common indicators of success while highlighting where investments will be needed over time.

We will continue to assess the patterns and impacts of protracted disaster displacement by collecting and analysing data on the number of people displaced in the medium to long term and conducting qualitative research into the phenomenon. We will also continue to develop our understanding of disaster displacement risk in order to track global trends, identify future hotspots and assess the role and impacts of climate change. For this, we will work with leading agencies to learn from different risk modelling approaches and, building on our joint programme with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) in the Pacific, we will continue to invest in information and tools that help governments prevent and better prepare for such displacement in the future.

We commit to continuing to provide a unique foundation upon which future risk assessments can be built. Our disaster displacement data is vital to ground-truth risk models, inform early warning and preparedness measures and direct funding to where it is most needed. It also provides the basis to advocate for a better integration of displacement in disaster risk reduction strategies and more systematic development approaches to reducing displacement risk. For example, we will also be working with IOM in the coming months to develop displacement indicators for countries to report against the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which currently makes no provisions for such monitoring at the global level.

02. Supporting national capacities

Support for countries to improve national monitoring and reporting on internal displacement is at the heart of our 2030 strategy. We are keen to contribute to ongoing efforts to establish comprehensive and robust data systems to inform country planning, budgeting and operational responses, and we look forward to working closely with our data partners to coordinate and deliver support that makes the most of our collective skills, expertise and resources. Our membership of EGRIS and participation in its work will be instrumental in this respect.



We will advise countries, governments in particular, on how to improve the way they account for and report on internal displacement and support them in doing so. This will involve assessing and supporting the development of data systems and learning from their application in different contexts. We will also adapt our global tools to meet countries' needs by helping to develop frameworks to monitor progress using nationally relevant indicators and data sources, and we will be available to support socioeconomic impact assessments and disaster displacement risk analyses to inform operational and policy responses. We will also focus on supporting the development of interoperable datasets and indicators that can be used to report against policy targets ranging from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the Sendai Framework.

Our support and accompaniment will be demand-driven, time-bound and delivered in partnership with specialised agencies. We currently provide technical support to the governments of Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Somalia, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, and we will be exploring further engagement with the governments of Burkina Faso and Mali from 2022.

03. Facilitating state-to-state learning and exchange

Hearing first-hand accounts of what others have done, seeing that change is possible and receiving positive recognition have proved to be powerful sources of motivation for action.

We have invested heavily in recent years in convening meetings and dialogue between the permanent representatives and missions of countries dealing with internal displacement. These exchanges have provided a unique and much-needed forum for peer-to-peer exchange and contributed to mobilising political will and engagement.

We plan to resume these activities in November 2021 and hope they will serve as useful complements to future exchanges within the panel's Group of Friends. We will also continue to invest in frequent bilateral exchanges with countries

to raise awareness, build common understanding and find new ways of addressing internal displacement nationally and internationally.

To make peer-to-peer exchange and examples of best practice accessible to a larger group of stakeholders, we plan to develop an online Global Repository of Good Practices where states can share experiences and learning with one another. This will complement ongoing efforts to establish a community of practice for UN agencies and NGOs by the multistakeholder platform GP2.0, of which we are an active member. We hope its content would also inform a potential annual report of the Secretary-General on solutions to internal displacement, as recommended by the panel.

IDMC's call to action

We take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to carry forward the recommendations of the panel's report and ensure that the important momentum that led to its creation is sustained. We stand ready to harness our network of trusted partners across the globe, develop new partnerships and play a key role in the establishment and nurturing of a follow-up Coalition of Champions. We will build on what we have already committed to in our [2030 strategy](#) as we believe it will take us a long way in the right direction. And we call on all our partners within the UN system, national governments, international and national NGOs, civil society and the private sector to join us in these efforts.

Cover photo: Aerial view of people walking along an almost dry arm of the Parana River, which water level reached a historic low, near Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina, on August 22, 2021. - The Parana River, which runs through Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, the tenth largest river basin in the world, has reached its lowest water level in over half a century and it is an enigma whether it is a natural cycle or a result of climate change, with uncertain long-term effects. (Photo by JUAN MABROMATA/AFP via Getty Images)





*The newly displaced wait for assistance in the open at Drodro's church. Due to a lack of aid organisations providing shelter, the newly displaced Hema settle in religious concessions, public buildings, or in the open air. Unaccompanied women and children face a greater risk of harassment, assault, or exploitation if they live in the open or in shelters without adequate walls or secure door. 10 November 2020
Drodro, Djugu region, Ituri province
Photo: Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC*

Every day, people flee conflict and disasters and become displaced inside their own countries. IDMC provides data and analysis and supports partners to identify and implement solutions to internal displacement.

Join us as we work to make real and lasting change for internally displaced people in the decade ahead.



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