



United Nations Development Programme

**INVESTING IN A DEVELOPMENT  
APPROACH TO INTERNAL  
DISPLACEMENT**

2023-2027

# THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Over 71 million people remained forcibly displaced within their own countries at the end of 2022 due to conflict, violence and disasters – an all-time high. That figure represents a 20 percent increase compared to 2021 with the higher numbers caused not only by the ongoing war in Ukraine but also due a lack of solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in (often protracted) displacement, entrenched conflicts and an increasing number of disasters in various parts of the world.

While in the past, most of the protracted internal displacement was caused by violence and conflict, disaster-related internal displacement is becoming widespread, with new displacements recorded in over 148 countries and territories in 2022. The World Bank predicts that by 2050, climate change could force more than 216 million people to move within their own countries.

Some progress has been made since the adoption of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

(1998) to reduce displacement-related protection and assistance needs. Yet responses, including those related to durable solutions, remain largely implemented through humanitarian actors, programming and financing. National – government and/or national – strategies and plans to address internal displacement are often either unavailable or unimplemented. The lack of a consistent focus on national ownership and of allocating adequate national development resources have prevented previous ambitions towards reducing from being realized, let alone ending internal displacement.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2022, some 80 percent of IDPs lived in fragile settings with displacement being both a cause and outcome of fragility. Moreover, a very significant part of the displacement has a highly protracted character, hence impeding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in affected countries.

## A GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION

In 2021, a [High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#) (HLP), commissioned by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, issued its report calling for a renewed approach that recognizes solutions as a development priority in which national ownership is crucial. UNDP actively contributed to this Report, working with other development stakeholders. The HLP advocated for enhanced focus on internal displacement in national policies and strategies and concluded that achieving solutions to internal displacement requires much earlier and more predictable engagement of development, peace, climate change and disaster management actors complemented by sustained development financing.

To take forward the HLP recommendations, the Secretary-General launched in June 2022 his [Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), advocating for a fundamental shift from a humanitarian to a development approach to solutions. The Action Agenda outlines 31 commitments for the UN to advance solutions to internal displacement, prevent new displacements and ensure that IDPs receive better protection and assistance. The implementation of the Action Agenda is supported by a new time-bound Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement appointed by the Secretary-General and through a global UN Steering Group on Solutions, of which UNDP is a member.

# UNDP'S CRITICAL ROLE AS THE LEAD UN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Support to fragile and crisis contexts is a key part of UNDP's portfolio. Over 50 percent of UNDP's programming and 9 out of the 10 of UNDP's largest Country Offices are in fragile contexts, including those with large-scale displaced populations. By *staying and delivering* in crises, UNDP has already supported the return and/or (re)integration of millions of IDPs, built capacities that have helped reduce the impact of disasters,

and the risk of violence, in dozens of countries, and helped tens of millions of people retain their livelihoods, access basic social, security and justice services, and build better lives after crises. In the process, UNDP has empowered women and youth, promoted inclusive institutions, including for the rule of law and respect for human rights, and strengthened social cohesion for more peaceful, just and sustainable human development.

## SNAPSHOT OF UNDP PROGRAMMING ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

In **Afghanistan**, ABADEI is a UNDP Afghanistan flagship programme that supports livelihoods and basic services, boosting local economies, builds or refurbishes community infrastructure, helps build disaster and climate resilience, and enhances bottom-up, inclusive community engagement and involvement. In partnership with UNHCR, UNDP works in priority areas to build on ongoing support to the basic needs of IDPs and refugees returning home, help stabilize communities and set conditions for sustainable reintegration.

In **Bangladesh**, climate-induced displacement is a key issue for future development with many people being uprooted as previous livelihoods become untenable. Rural poor mostly end up in Dhaka's slums. UNDP works with Aspire to Innovate (a2i), the government's flagship digital transformation programme. This includes an online platform for displaced populations and host communities to build their skills and access livelihood opportunities through employment and entrepreneurship.

In **Colombia**, UNDP supports economic recovery, reconciliation, returns and relocation, and peacebuilding in conflict-hit areas for IDPs and host/return communities. Through strong community engagement, UNDP promotes the participation of displaced persons in the peace process, ensuring their voices are included in development plans and through supporting networks of IDPs engaging in national development efforts, including conducting the oversight of returns, relocation and integration. Helping repair the social contract, UNDP strengthens local government capacities to implement existing and new victim reparation schemes, including collective reparation.

In **Sudan**, UNDP is focused on inclusive socio-economic transformation, restoring governance through inclusive and accountable institutions, sustaining and consolidating local peacebuilding, and delivering services at the community level to promote sustainable return, stabilization and peaceful coexistence. UNDP's Community Security and Stabilization Programme operates in six states, supporting thousands of people with livelihood opportunities, community asset construction or rehabilitation, peacebuilding and community stabilization.

In **Iraq**, since 2015, UNDP has been working in partnership with the Government of Iraq, the Global Coalition Against Daesh and the other agencies of the UN system on the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS). This FFS has carried out activities in 31 locations affected by the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. The stabilization programme has had a portfolio of more than 4,800 projects and helped support the return of 4.9 million Iraqis displaced by the ISIS conflict, while helping more than 13.2 million Iraqis with better access to basic infrastructure and services like health, education, water and electricity, and millions in accessing livelihood opportunities as a result of US\$1.48 billion in investments from 30 international partners. Managed well, stabilization can be foundational to re-establish the social contract, sustain peace, recovery and allow longer-term social cohesion and development solutions processes to achieve impact.

However, many previous UNDP initiatives were funded from small, time-bound thematic project budgets. Others were part of larger programmes, either linked to the humanitarian response, early recovery or stabilization efforts. Few projects addressed internal displacement as the primary target, rather there were often specific thematic projects and programmes (such as rule of law or local service delivery) that had an indirect impact on IDPs and displacement-affected communities (DACs).

The new path called by the UN Secretary-General considers the prevention of and solutions to internal displacement as a “development priority”. UNDP is at the centre of this transformational shift from a humanitarian to a development approach to internal displacement. This means moving from addressing solutions to internal displacement as an “exit strategy” to promoting solutions as an “engagement strategy” in the longer term. A development solutions response considers the wider political economy of forced

displacement that places internal displacement in the context of broader societal processes such as climate change, urbanization and transformation of rural and urban livelihoods. Moreover, a strong emphasis on prevention (both conflict/violence and disaster/climate change) has been built into the Action Agenda. UNDP must continue working hand in hand with humanitarian and peace actors and playing a substantive role in all management phases of displacement: prevention, protection and solutions.

UNDP’s comparative advantage lies both in its core mandate of crisis prevention and recovery, addressing the root causes of displacement whether conflict/violence or climate/disaster related, as well as in applying integrated approaches to solutions after population movements have taken place. Advancing solutions to internal displacement is integral to UNDP’s efforts to reduce inequalities and promote the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **UNDP’S NEW STRATEGY ON DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS TO INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT**

In line with UNDP’s [Strategic Plan](#) (2022 – 2025) and [Crisis Offer](#) (2022), UNDP’s new Institutional Strategy on Development Solutions to Internal displacement brings an integrated human development approach, creating the legal, political, economic, social and environmental conditions that allow IDPs and DACs to enjoy their rights and freedoms, to live with dignity and economic security, and contribute, as agents of change, to peace and sustainable development in their communities. To support this approach, UNDP’s institutional strategy is built on four key transitions (strategic inputs):

1. Promoting a development approach to solutions – UNDP will engage in policy dialogue with national stakeholders on the need for development approaches to solutions, fostering national ownership of solutions that is translated into plans and strategies based on data and evidence.
2. Integrated prevention and solutions programming – UNDP will adapt and implement existing and new innovative programmes/projects as the building blocks of risk-informed, conflict-sensitive, and age, gender and diversity-responsive solutions that can support ending displacement and longer-term social cohesion and peace.
3. Focused development solutions financing – UNDP will promote more focused financing for medium to long-term solutions and play a stronger role as convenor of more predictable and sustainable financing conditions.
4. Extended engagement and partnerships – UNDP will extend its trusted partnerships with national and local governments and DACs, as well as with human rights, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. It will also support solutions platforms and coordination forums.

# A STRENGTHENED UNDP ABLE TO DELIVER ON ACTION AGENDA COMMITMENTS

A whole-of-UNDP approach is needed to deliver on UNDP's commitments to the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Effective policy and programming guidance includes leveraging the wider UNDP Global Policy Network (GPN) services offers, strengthened country office support led by Regional Bureaux and Regional Hubs and promoting development solutions to internal displacement with humanitarian, development and peace partners, as well as International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

## COUNTRY LEVEL

In internal displacement-affected countries, including the 16 priority countries prioritized by the Secretary General's Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement,<sup>1</sup> UNDP must operate as a strategic, coherent and consistent partner to the UN Resident Coordinators (UN RCs) designated as overall lead on the solutions agenda at the country level.

This means ensuring that UNDP country offices have enough capacity to co-lead, engage and provide technical support to national and local-level solutions coordination processes (solutions working groups, local solutions governance structures, etc.) building off our strong relationships with government and national stakeholders. It also means critically

reviewing and better leveraging country offices project portfolios to address the drivers of and find solutions to internal displacement centred on the needs and aspirations of IDPs and host communities, and focusing on (local) governance, rule of law and access to justice, conflict prevention and resilience-building, poverty reduction, socio-economic integration and social cohesion, and addressing climate change and other environmental drivers of internal displacement.

While each context is different, it will require UNDP to: (1) invest in political economy analysis and robust data and evidence to support the design of nationally owned and locally led plans and strategies on internal displacement; (2) scale up innovative prevention and development solutions programming through adapting some of its existing sectoral projects and programmes, and developing new programmes to support IDPs and displacement-affected communities in a comprehensive manner – in partnership with other UN agencies, IFIs/ Multi-Lateral Development Banks (MDB), civil society, or the private sector; and (3) support governments in accessing development financing for prevention and solutions, harnessing UNDP tools and advisory capacity to link policy areas to deliver on SDGs with their public finance.

<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Vanuatu and Yemen.

## UNDP PORTFOLIO APPROACHES ON PREVENTION AND SOLUTIONS

- **Governance:** Is central for understanding and addressing the development challenges that IDPs and affected communities face. It is a key driver of a national and local level empowerment strategies. It is also to be considered the missing link in earlier attempts towards an area-based approach as pursued under durable solutions. Local/urban governance systems and rule-of-law institutions in particular play a crucial role in ensuring the equitable delivery of services to IDPs and host communities, contributing to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, and promoting stability, security, justice, and restoration of political, social and economic rights, all elements of a robust social contract. Informal governance actors (both champions, gatekeepers and spoilers) also play an important role, and their presence needs to be acknowledged, especially at the local level.
- **Resilience:** Resilient communities are better prepared to prevent and address recurring and cyclical displacement caused by a wide range of shocks and threats, including conflict, climate change, disasters and epidemics. UNDP applies a systems approach that is (a) conflict sensitive and risk informed; (b) grounded in a deeper understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of the challenges; (c) focused on programmes and initiatives aimed at rebuilding social cohesion and climate resilient infrastructure; and (d) considering the needs of the furthest left behind, especially women and young people, from an empowerment perspective, reconciling individuals with institutions and other groups, and building trust between citizens and national/local authorities. UNDP will also integrate [mental health and psychosocial support](#) into its programming to reverse or mitigate the devastating consequences that crisis and related displacement can have on the mental well-being of individuals and communities.
- **Poverty reduction and reducing inequalities:** UNDP support focuses on local economic development and measures to improve the livelihoods of DACs, as well as their social and economic inclusion and integration, supported by appropriate social protection and social insurance mechanisms for particularly vulnerable segments of IDPs and host communities. These conditions have a direct influence over their decisions on where to locate or relocate. Attention will also be paid to the informal economy in which many IDPs are trapped – women in particular.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Effectively preventing and addressing climate/disaster-induced internal displacement requires investments in understanding and identifying environmental risks and reducing climate vulnerability. National disaster laws and policies, together with institutional coordination mechanisms, can instigate action from the national to the local community level. UNDP will bank on its rich experience working on environmental conservation, climate adaptation and mitigation, and disaster risk reduction, which are all key to prevent displacement and build back better.
- **Access to clean energy:** Both a preventive measure and creating the conditions for a sustainable return, integration, relocation of IDPs. It is also an essential enabler for displaced and host communities to access information, connect with families, conduct online cash transfers, access digital health and education, etc. Access to clean energy can also contribute to improved security. In many informal settlements where IDPs and other vulnerable groups reside, lack of energy indeed results in poorly lit communal spaces and exposes women and girls to heightened risks of violence.
- **Gender equality and women's empowerment:** More than half of IDPs are women and girls. They experience displacement differently from men and boys, and face specific challenges that must be well understood, including the particularly high exposure to risks of physical and sexual violence, abuse, kidnappings, early and forced marriages, partner violence, as well as gender-based discrimination and labor exploitation. Special attention is needed to ensure their social and political participation, their access to land and property rights, [civil documentation](#) and services, including care facilities, and their economic inclusion, through enhanced access to livelihood opportunities and decent jobs. Cultural, social and religious traditions and norms that hinder women's empowerment also need to be well understood.
- **Integrated National Financing Frameworks:** Through the Sustainable Finance Hub, UNDP is leading UN system-wide efforts to help countries develop Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs). Explicitly designed to bring together actors to formulate financing strategies for national priorities, INFFs are currently underway in over 80 countries. Many of these also include commitments on local financing (e.g., reforming intergovernmental fiscal transfers, reviewing laws on revenue generation, etc.), which will be critical in allowing local and municipal governments to deliver local development solutions.

## REGIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS

The Action Agenda calls for a step change in the international response to prevention and solutions to internal displacement. At the regional level, Human Mobility Advisers across UNDP's six Regional Hubs – Amman, Bangkok, Dakar, Istanbul, Nairobi and Panama – act as a critical link between headquarters, Regional Bureaux and country offices, by identifying concrete opportunities and promoting synergies at the regional level, but also extracting lessons learned that can be shared across regions. UNDP will also create a pool of specialized internal displacement advisers and consultants for rapid on-demand deployment to country offices.

The Recovery Solutions and Human Mobility Team at the Crisis Bureau in headquarters will leverage policy and programmatic support across GPN teams to deliver against the strategy through the development of new guidance, tools and capacity-building materials to support the further alignment of UNDP work on crisis prevention and development solutions.

UNDP also ambitions to play an active role in generating new knowledge on successful approaches that may be relevant in other similar and/or future internal displacement contexts, ensuring that internal displacement is included in wider development processes such as the 2030 Agenda. UNDP will also focus on generating data to better understand the long-term impact of internal displacement on development agendas in affected countries and progress towards the SDGs.

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