



Submission to UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

March 2021

Overview

This submission to the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (the Panel) has been prepared by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

This submission focuses on internal displacement in the context of disasters and the adverse impacts of the climate crisis.

This submission provides an overview of four key issues that the IFRC recommends are prioritised by the Panel, including the importance of:

- (1) community-based approaches**
- (2) climate smart disaster laws**
- (3) anticipatory and forecast based action, and**
- (4) data on internal displacement**

The IFRC notes that these issues are not the only areas of concern for the IFRC related to internal displacement. These are important issues where the IFRC believes that the Panel, at this stage of its process, could further prioritise.¹

This submission notes that these should not be seen as stand-alone issues, but as part of the integrated approach necessary to addressing internal displacement. An integrated approach is vital due to the complexity but also the inter-connectedness of the reasons behind risk and vulnerability in the context of internal displacement. Communities may face the humanitarian consequences of internal displacement in part due to exposure to sudden or slow onset hazards, but also in part due

¹ The IFRC also has key concerns related to, for example, the specific needs of IDPs in urban settings; the need to take concerted action to prevent the conditions that lead to internal displacement; the need to better invest and reinforce collective efforts in support of durable solutions; and the need to support livelihoods, protection, mental health and PSS and social cohesion between IDPs and host communities. See, for example: IFRC, Strengthening IFRC Approaches to Internal Displacement, 2019, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/11/IDP-Summary-Report-Final-LR.pdf>

to the broader context of vulnerability in which affected individuals, households or communities exist. This broader context of vulnerability is influenced by factors as diverse as development levels, population growth, urbanisation, human rights protection, marginalisation and exclusion.

In order to adequately reduce risks and protect people affected by internal displacement, an integrated approach needs to address both: exposure to hazards and the broader context of vulnerability in which individuals, households and communities are situated. As emphasised in the 2020 IFRC World Disasters Report “‘Integration’ may not sound like a particularly revolutionary approach, but it is indispensable”.

An integrated approach means that within the humanitarian sector we must collectively do more to enhance cooperation and complementarity between local, national and international actors. Despite long-standing positive rhetoric along these lines, the reality is that the “international world” of IDP-focused agencies, donors and commentators are still often quite separate (in planning, jargon, worldview), from the world of governments and local civil society actors. An integrated approach also means that it is not sufficient to see internal displacement as a solely humanitarian issue. Humanitarian actors need to work in collaboration and partnership with environmental organisations, development organisations, human rights organisations, international financial institutions, academic researchers, the private sector and other organisations.

Such an integrated approach is already called for in many of the key legal and policy frameworks that address internal displacement. However, much more needs to be done in practice to promote coherence and complementarity in our collective approaches to internal displacement, as well as full implementation of these frameworks at the regional, national and local levels.

Background

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is an international organisation that strengthens, coordinates and represents the life-saving humanitarian action of 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide. These National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – through their 14 million volunteers – are part of countless thousands of communities in nearly every country in the world, including in many communities affected by internal displacement. This unparalleled local presence, combined with the IFRC Secretariat’s role in global coordination, capacity strengthening, resource mobilization and representation, form the world’s largest and most effective humanitarian network.

Every year the IFRC across its global network of 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies provides direct assistance and protection to large numbers of people in the context of internal displacement. This assistance and protection is delivered both locally, and across the globe. This means that the IFRC is able to combine direct operational experience at the local level with a global reach and knowledge that enables the transfer and sharing of best practices, insights and guidance.

This assistance and protection is also complemented with initiatives to enhance resilience; reduce disaster and displacement risks; to support communities to adapt to the effects of climate change; and to recover from disasters and displacement, including to achieve durable solutions.

The IFRC is also committed to complementing our operational experience with national, regional and global dialogue to share the perspectives and priorities of local communities and local actors, and to influence decision makers to consider the needs of those affected by internal displacement. Our engagement on internal displacement in the context of disasters and climate change includes representation on the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement, and engagement in priority *fora* and with

frameworks including the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP), the Platform on Disaster Displacement, regional platforms including the Asia Disaster Displacement Working Group, the Pacific Human Mobility Working Group, and through mechanisms such as the newly established Anticipation Hub.

For the IFRC, reducing risks, addressing needs and supporting solutions in the context of internal displacement is a major global strategic priority. To reinforce our collective efforts, we have taken a series of commitments across the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement including in our new Strategy 2030² and our Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis.³

The IFRC approach to internal displacement is driven by our Fundamental Principles and humanitarian commitment. This means that we work with all people affected by and at risk of internal displacement – IDPs themselves, host communities and others – and based purely on need. Our work also recognises and complements the role of respective authorities – who have the primary duty of care towards communities affected by internal displacement. This approach aligns with the role that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.

This approach is reflected and guided by the Movement Policy on Internal Displacement,⁴ adopted in 2009. The Movement Policy complements the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Recommendation 1: Community based approaches to ensure no-one is left behind

Recent years have seen a significant increase in global recognition of the challenges of internal displacement in the context of disasters and the climate crisis. However, it is crucial that this global attention is complemented with a focus and investment where it is needed the most – the local communities and local actors on the frontlines of internal displacement.

It is the views, the practices, the traditional and cultural knowledge, the experience and the capacity of communities affected by internal displacement – including IDPs, host communities and others - that must inform and lead our collective response to internal displacement. This also includes the crucial role and perspectives of local actors – including National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Local actors and communities can bring perspectives, knowledge, skills and capacities that are unable to be matched by national and international actors. Local actors are “always there” – before, during and after internal displacement – and are ideally placed to not only respond to emergency needs, but also to support longer term recovery, resilient development and the attainment of durable solutions.

Local actors and local communities are also able to help identify and access individuals and communities who would otherwise be left behind – including marginalised and “invisible” communities such as ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTI+ individuals and communities, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, as well as people with mental and physical impairments.

A community-based approach leads to better-quality, more cost-effective, innovative, more responsive and relevant interventions as well as sustainable outcomes, including local integration.

² IFRC Strategy 2030, available at: <https://future-rcrc.com/strategy-2030/>

³ Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/02/Movement-Climate-Ambitions-2020-final.pdf>

⁴ Movement Policy on Internal Displacement Resolution No. 5 of the 2009 Council of Delegates, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/1124-movement-policy-internal-displacement-resolution-no-5-2009-council-delegates>

The Panel can take the opportunity to reinforce the centrality of local communities, and local actors, in addressing the challenges of and identifying solutions related to internal displacement.

The Panel can recommend that local actors and communities be meaningfully and systematically engaged in all aspects of internal displacement, from understanding risks, including climate, environmental and displacement risks; reducing risks of displacement; preparing for displacement; addressing humanitarian and protection needs that arise during displacement; and supporting resilient recovery, development and the attainment of durable solutions.

The Panel can recommend that States ensure that displaced people have access to useful and actionable information in appropriate languages, that they are involved/engaged in decisions affecting them and that they are able to influence assistance and protection support.

The Panel can also recommend that local actors be engaged in the development of legal and policy frameworks that address the needs of communities affected by internal displacement (see below - Recommendation 2: Climate smart disaster laws that address the needs of vulnerable groups). Local actors can bring data and insights from the community level to ensure policies to reduce risks or address displacement are evidence informed and inclusive of the whole community.

However, a community-based approach also requires investment. The Panel can recommend that there must be an investment in the capacity of local actors and communities, including with flexible and accessible financing. This can help to ensure that local actors and communities can better understand and respond to risk, can support more positive relations between displaced and host communities and can support these key players to become a more equal actor with national, regional and international actors and stakeholders.

Recommendation 2: Climate smart disaster laws that address the needs of vulnerable groups

Among the bodies of law that relate to internal displacement – disaster law is an essential, but often under-explored, aspect of the integrated approach necessary to addressing internal displacement in the context of disasters and climate change.⁵

Most countries have some form of disaster risk management system that is underpinned by one or more laws (known as disaster law). These frameworks establish the legal basis for all aspects of disaster risk management from risk reduction, to preparedness, response and recovery and provide the enabling environment for actions downstream. Disaster law can also help to clarify roles and responsibilities and coordination mechanisms for disaster risk management across sectors as well as from the national to the local level.

Used effectively, disaster law can support more integrated approaches and institutional mechanisms for coordination on displacement across sectors and from national to community level. Disaster law and policy can be a tool for managing displacement risk by mandating or facilitating key practical measures, such as infrastructure upgrades, housing improvements and livelihood diversification for at-risk communities. Finally, disaster law and policy can also mandate contingency planning for practical measures that meet the assistance and protection needs of those displaced, as well as host communities, and provide for longer term support to mitigate risk, recover and support the realisation of durable solutions.

⁵ IFRC Climate and Disaster Displacement: The Importance of Disaster Law and Policy, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/01/Climate-and-Disaster-Displacement-The-Importance-of-Disaster-Law-and-Policy.pdf>

During the recent Pacific consultation for the Panel, many governments stated that they are using their climate and disaster laws as the main frameworks to prepare, reduce risks and respond to displacement.⁶ However, at the same time, IFRC research has found that displacement, including due to climate related risks, is often absent or not adequately addressed in disaster laws.⁷

In response to advocacy from some international organisations, some governments have also adopted stand-alone laws on internal displacement. Given their connection to the Guiding Principles, these laws have tended to have a much better grounding in the rights of IDPs (particularly in the recovery stage) than more general disaster laws. However, there can be a risk of placing support for IDPs into its own silo (and privileging the needs of only one type of impact of a disaster over others). This should be mitigated – either by integrating relevant provisions for IDPs into DRM laws or policies instead, or by making the right links with them (and their corresponding institutions).

To guide the implementation of effective disaster law, the IFRC has developed a global synthesis report⁸ and checklist⁹ for States which contains recommendations on integrating displacement into disaster law.

The Panel can recommend that States and relevant actors invest in developing effective disaster laws that reduce displacement risks, including in the context of disasters and the climate crisis.

Recommendation 3: Anticipatory and forecast based action

The primary aim of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – and others – in the context of internal displacement is to protect people against arbitrary displacement and to reduce the risk of displacement caused by natural and man-made hazards.

However, in many contexts, displacement is a necessary measure to protect safety and health (for example in the context of pre-emptive and planned evacuations). In other contexts, displacement may be unavoidable due to the unforeseen location or strength of a particular hazard; or where resilience, risk reduction and adaptation measures have been insufficient.

Where displacement is necessary or unavoidable, it is vital that steps should be taken to better anticipate and prepare for such displacement. This is a point emphasised in the recent DG ECHO Disaster Preparedness Guidance:

“Preparedness for displacement can help strengthen the capacity of national and local actors to effectively manage displacement situations by assisting and protecting those displaced and linking to interventions supporting them in their efforts to find durable solutions to end displacement.”¹⁰

For both of these approaches – reducing the risk of displacement and preparing for displacement – there is increasing interest in the role of anticipatory humanitarian action – including forecast based financing. For example, the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement recently called on States to:

⁶ See full recoding available at: <http://www.resilientpacific.org/media-and-events/>

⁷ IFRC Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response Multi-Country Synthesis Report, available

at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/law-disaster-preparedness-response-multi-country-synthesis-report/>

⁸ IFRC Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response Multi-Country Synthesis Report, available

at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/law-disaster-preparedness-response-multi-country-synthesis-report/>

⁹ IFRC The Checklist on Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response, available

at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/checklist-law-disaster-preparedness-response/>

¹⁰ DG ECHO Disaster Preparedness Guidance, 15 February 2021.

“Strengthen preparedness, including early warning systems, contingency planning, evacuation planning and resilience – building strategies and plans, and develop innovative approaches, such as forecast-based financing, to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change”. [emphasis added]

Anticipatory humanitarian action is a set of actions taken to prevent or mitigate potential disaster impacts before a shock or before acute impacts are felt. The actions are carried out in anticipation of a hazard impact and based on a prediction of how the event will unfold. Mechanisms to implement anticipatory humanitarian actions are already established or under development in more than 60 countries around the world.¹¹

A recent analysis¹² has shown that early actions have already been designed and implemented to reduce risks and address the needs of communities in the context of internal displacement. This includes early actions that facilitate safe and planned evacuations; preposition food and safe drinking water in displacement sites; support anticipatory protection measures for individuals at high risk among IDP communities; reinforce shelters and critical infrastructure to protect households against displacement; and deliver cash-based interventions giving people the ability to move out of harm's way.¹³

Early actions have also supported the protection of livelihoods for vulnerable communities. For example, in Mongolia, despite significant efforts to build herders' resilience to *dzud*, many vulnerable families face a real risk of livestock loss that could contribute to subsequent poverty and potential displacement to urban slums.¹⁴

Recent analysis also shows that early actions (and particularly forecast based financing) are more than just the early release of humanitarian funding. The programme architecture contributes to a better and common understanding of the drivers and underlying factors that affect displacement. In part, this is due to community-led assessments being at the core of targeted FbF interventions. In several contexts this information has helped to determine when early actions should be triggered, and what specific interventions would be most effective. The ability of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – as local actors – to identify and collect information about affected communities, connect with local authorities, as well as provide assistance is a key element in the success of FbF.

The Panel can recommend that innovative anticipatory action approaches such as forecast based financing be invested in and analysed and evaluated on an ongoing basis for their possibility of reducing risks and addressing the needs of communities affected by and at risk of internal displacement.

Recommendation 4: Data on Internal Displacement

The High-Level Panel workstream on data speaks to the importance of information required to address internal displacement, for both reducing displacement risk and responding to the needs of IDPs.

¹¹ See for example the Anticipation Hub, available at: <https://www.forecast-based-financing.org/anticipation-hub/>

¹² IFRC and Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Forecast based Financing and Disaster Displacement, 2020, available at: https://www.forecast-based-financing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/RCRC_IFRC-FbF-and-Displacement-Issue-Brief.pdf

¹³ IFRC and Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Forecast based Financing and Disaster Displacement, 2020, available at: https://www.forecast-based-financing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/RCRC_IFRC-FbF-and-Displacement-Issue-Brief.pdf

¹⁴ GP20, Mongolia: forecast based financing to avoid disaster displacement, available at: <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/mongolia.pdf>

Comprehensive, robust data is the key to understanding and measuring displacement risk and for identifying the most effective measures to reduce it. It is also critical to provide support to people who are displaced and to measure their progress toward durable solutions.

The IFRC and its 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are uniquely well positioned to address gaps in data and to identify locally appropriate measures to reduce future displacement risk (associated with disasters and climate change). The IFRC network responds directly to situations of disaster displacement across the globe, each year, and through this work the IFRC can help shed light on small scale events that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities – and which often go unnoticed and underreported in global monitoring and reporting.

A second key gap that the IFRC can help address concerns time series data about how situations of displacement evolve over time. This information is essential not only to indicate how many people remain in displacement at a given moment following a disaster; displacement data also helps identify which interventions are most effective for helping people achieve durable solutions to their displacement.

Sex and age disaggregated data on disaster displacement is also a key gap which IFRC can help address through its global coverage and local presence. One's needs in displacement – and people's experiences of displacement – are specific to one's sex and age and other factors. These demographic characteristics often determine when and why people might flee their homes and where they will go once displaced. Without this data, it is difficult to inform appropriate responses and policies at all levels of society. Because National Societies are present in communities before, during and after crises occur, they are well positioned to address this data gap as well.