



Supporting Nationally Owned Processes for Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement

Event Background Paper

Prepared by the Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General's
High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared by the Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (hereafter, "the Panel") as a background paper¹ for the event jointly organized with the European Union on *Supporting Nationally Owned Processes for Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement*. The event focuses on how the international system can most effectively support nationally owned processes to help IDPs attain durable solutions. While the issues framed for discussion focus on the mechanics of how this can be achieved, looking at solutions processes, coordination, and financing, it is underlined that the ultimate aim is immensely human: an imperative to support families and communities to find a lasting end to their displacement.

The paper highlights key inputs and recommendations the Panel has received thus far on the three focus themes of the event, namely: (i) Supporting nationally owned durable solutions processes that are guided by international standards, (ii) Coordinating solutions efforts, and (iii) Financing for solutions. The paper captures ideas that the Panel believes merit further exploration and debate, and the discussion on these ideas will assist the Panel in further refining its conclusions and recommendations.

Speakers and participants are encouraged to reflect on the contents of the paper and to share their thoughts during the discussion. Readers are also invited to consult the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons² and other materials on the concepts and standards applicable to durable solutions in contexts of internal displacement which, in the interest of brevity, are not elaborated here.

2. Overarching Framing

Around the world, millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are trapped in protracted displacement. In consultations carried out with IDPs and host communities for the High-Level Panel, solutions stood out as a clear and urgent priority. IDPs described an overwhelming desire to regain their independence and self-sufficiency, break out of the difficult conditions they often are trapped in, and be able to reclaim their futures.

When asked what they hoped their lives would look like in five years, preferences about solutions varied. Many hoped to return to their previous homes, expressing a longing to rebuild their communities and reconnect with their ancestral land. Others, particularly in urban and protracted settings, preferred to remain in their current location or settle elsewhere whether because they had built a new life in their place of displacement or simply feared their homes would never be secure. Across solutions preferences, however, safety, livelihoods, and a stable home stood out as common priorities.

¹ The paper was drafted to stimulate discussion and does not represent the official views of the organizers.

² <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons>

As highlighted in the Concept Note for this event, the Panel's consultations and research thus far emphasize that durable solutions processes are most effective when they are nationally owned and when IDPs are recognized and treated as rights-holding citizens of their countries. This national ownership of solutions critically involves the government but also requires the robust and meaningful engagement of IDPs and host communities themselves, as well as of local and national civil society. Solutions processes must also respond to the specific needs of internally displaced women, men, boys, and girls, and be directly guided by their intentions and preferences. There should be no predetermined hierarchy of solutions options.

While recognizing the criticality of national ownership, inputs to the Panel have suggested that there is also an important role for international actors to play in supporting solutions. This engagement by international actors can take many forms, whether in assisting the government to benefit from best practices, engaging operationally to support community recovery and resilience, or orienting financing towards longer-term objectives and solutions. What is clear, however, is that international actors must go beyond short-term humanitarian approaches and see solutions to displacement as an intrinsic component of broader development and recovery.

In this context, a key question for the discussion is: **how can international actors support a nationally owned durable solutions process?** This paper proposes answers to that question that have emerged from discussions thus far that can be explored further during the event.

3. Supporting nationally owned durable solutions processes that are guided by international standards

As the Concept Note reiterates, states bear the primary responsibility for protecting and supporting their citizens and residents on their territories. In practice, addressing internal displacement often competes with many other national priorities, particularly in times of crisis or disaster, and governments are not always willing or able to fulfil this role. As a result, efforts to achieve solutions may either be absent or can be carried out in a manner that is inconsistent with international standards and/or best practices. It is in this context that the question of how international humanitarian, development and political actors can engage to support nationally owned approaches that adhere to international standards becomes particularly vital.

The Panel has received a number of recommendations on ways to support nationally owned durable solutions, which focus predominantly on protracted displacement contexts in which the state has shown some willingness to be involved in enabling solutions. These are summarized below.

- a. Develop a mechanism for the systematic and predictable provision of technical support.** This would seek to support capacity and could take the form of a global or regional Center of Excellence, deployable solutions advisors, or peer-to-peer learning platform. The technical assistance mechanism could support both State actors and international actors.
- b. Incentivize action on solutions by establishing a platform that would offer visibility and peer-to-peer learning.** To support political commitment to addressing displacement, this platform at global- or regional-level could offer states the opportunity to demonstrate their efforts to address solutions, enhance their reputation, and learn from others. Such a platform could also bring together other relevant actors and experts.

- c. **Where not already present, facilitate the establishment of a representation body for IDPs** that can feed into relevant government and UN processes. IDPs and host community members of all ages and genders not only have the right to be involved in processes and decisions that affect them but supporting their engagement can likewise offer greater chances of meaningful progress on solutions.
- d. **Develop operational guidance on incorporating solutions into development plans.** This could be primarily oriented towards national development plans but could also be relevant to plans of UN development actors and international financial institutions. Such guidance could assist willing actors to develop their capacity to support solutions to displacement.
- e. **Develop and use resilience and solutions markers.** These markers could be used to assess the extent to which humanitarian and development programs contribute to resilience and solutions to displacement. Currently, the lack of information on the extent to which efforts contribute to resilience and solutions makes it difficult to assess spending, evaluate progress, or make strategic decisions. Resilience and solutions markers could help to correct this challenge.

Speakers and participants are encouraged to reflect and provide feedback on these recommendations and are also welcome to offer additional recommendations of their own.

4. Coordinating solutions efforts

The Concept Note has also highlighted that supporting nationally owned solutions processes requires international actors to have effective and appropriate coordination structures. In situations in which conflict is protracted and governments seem unwilling to support solutions in line with international standards (e.g. insisting on return at all costs), the international community should support the groundwork to reduce longer-term vulnerabilities and to crystallize more sustainable solutions when they become available.

Inputs to the Panel have highlighted that currently, there is limited accountability for ensuring progress toward solutions within the international system. Coordination and coherence among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors are weak and links with disaster and climate actors is often lacking. Solutions strategies are rare, often disconnected from other humanitarian and development plans, and are not linked to resourcing. As a result, they are seldomly implemented.

Below are some of the recommendations the Panel has received thus far to address those coordination challenges.

- a. **Shift systematically to area-based coordination, both during the emergency phase and for longer-term solutions.** Such a system could be aligned to longer-term area-based development plans that reinforce sustainable solutions and recovery.
- b. **Formally task Resident Coordinators with facilitating the development of a durable solutions strategy** through an inclusive process, in partnership with the Government wherever possible, and involving internally displaced and host community men, women, boys, and girls. Having a strategy could be an important step towards taking more deliberate action within the international system, linking solutions to other humanitarian and development plans and resourcing, and to effectively supporting national processes. It could also be tied to its own operational plans and appeal.

- c. **Establish a country-level Solutions Working Group to drive progress on solutions by the international actors.** To overcome disconnects between different types of actors and ensure that leadership on solutions is supported by an engine to drive change, this body could support the strategy and operational roll out of durable solutions efforts. It would be comprised of individuals across the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding communities and would ideally work closely with, or be co-chaired by, the government wherever possible.
- d. **Systematize the use of collective outcomes,** i.e. common objectives between various actors to be reached over several years, including in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Humanitarian Response Plans. This could help to bring together actors across the humanitarian-development-peace spectrum to work together in pursuit of solutions.
- e. **Establish a “post-Cluster system” to coordinate longer term solutions and recovery.** Such a system, co-led by the Government and international actors, could take over from the Clusters once the emergency phase has passed – notably in protracted crises. It could assist in ensuring the humanitarian coordination model is able to focus on lifesaving activities and has someone to hand over to when a transition becomes possible.
- f. **Designate a high-level official within the UN to mobilize system-wide engagement for IDP solutions.** At global level, this could take the form of an SRSG or USG/High-Representative on internal displacement. The function could be responsible for supporting RCs and actors at country-level, engaging across the humanitarian-development-peace components of the international system and carrying out high-level diplomacy with governments. It could likewise support adherence to standards and best practices across all actors and promote the meaningful participation of IDPs and host communities.

Speakers and participants are encouraged to reflect on and provide feedback on these recommendations and are also welcome to offer additional recommendations of their own.

5. Financing for solutions

Supporting solutions to displacement requires sustained funding over multiple years – whether in the form of bilateral assistance between governments or grants to international humanitarian or development actors. Currently, there is no clear funding or appeal mechanism for durable solutions, which tends to be seen as neither an entirely humanitarian responsibility nor a purely development task. The frequent lack of inclusion in national development plans means that solutions for IDPs are often overlooked by development donors while also often falling outside humanitarian funding channels. Siloed funding from donor governments that draw firm distinctions between humanitarian and development resources also creates challenges in enabling early efforts towards resilience and self-sufficiency.

Below are some of the recommendations the Panel has received thus far to better support solutions to internal displacement.

- a. **Encourage displacement-affected states to allocate funding to local municipalities on the basis of real (not census) population figures.** Local governments are often on the frontline of IDP responses and directing additional resources to them by using real-time figures could assist in improving their ability to respond.

- b. Establish a fund or window for durable solutions.** This could be a small-scale, catalytic funding mechanism to help kickstart solutions efforts and could take the form of a window in an existing multi-donor trust fund or country-based pooled fund. Such a model could help demonstrate the viability of larger scale or longer-term solutions investments. Alternatively, it could be a more substantial body like the Global Fund on AIDS, TB, and Malaria wherein states submit proposals for funding and report regularly against progress.
- c. Create a durable solutions appeal.** In countries that have developed a durable solutions strategy or plan, this appeal could provide longer-term funding and incentivize actors to establish coordinated and integrated durable solutions programs. It could also assist in scaling durable solutions initiatives beyond the catalytic phase and enable a transition from a predominantly humanitarian approach towards solutions where possible.
- d. Encourage International Financial Institutions to systematically support solutions to internal displacement.** This could entail a mix of measures such as ensuring that solutions to internal displacement is integrated into fragility financing, that internal displacement is part of strategic dialogues between IFIs and governments, building institutional capacity, systematically including IDPs in IFIs' broader development operations (including through specific financial instruments) or supporting data collection efforts on the socio-economic situation of IDPs and host communities. Given the sizeable budgets of IFIs, funding that promotes solutions could make a significant impact and could also incentivize states to incorporate solutions into their national development plans.
- e. Invest in the systems required to enable the use of cash transfers more systematically.** Cash offers IDPs more autonomy and power to make decisions about what is best for them and their futures. States, development actors, and the private sector could invest in the infrastructure and systems (e.g. access to bank accounts, digital identity, data protection systems) to allow for more widespread use of cash and enable IDPs to more readily benefit from it as they pursue solutions.

Speakers and participants are encouraged to reflect and provide feedback on these recommendations and are also welcome to offer additional recommendations of their own.

6. Conclusion

The recommendations outlined in this paper represent ideas around which there was some convergence of input from the Panel's external consultations and research. The Panel is interested to hear from speakers and participants whether these recommendations would assist in supporting nationally owned durable solutions, and/or whether there are other recommendations that may offer a greater contribution. The Panel is likewise committed to ensuring that its recommendations are technically sound, politically feasible, and implementable.

The Panel looks forward to a lively exchange and debate on these ideas during the event. If you are interested to provide feedback but are unable to participate in the discussion, you are welcome to provide comments in writing to the Secretariat.