UN Leadership and Coordination for Solutions at Country-Level
Discussion Paper

I.   Introduction

This paper has been prepared by the Secretariat of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement to serve as a background paper for a roundtable discussion on UN Leadership and Coordination for Solutions at Country-Level. It draws on inputs received from a wide range of stakeholders through submissions, bilateral consultations, research, and other academic inputs provided to the Panel.

The paper is part of a series developed by the Panel that examine how action and accountability on internal displacement could be strengthened within the UN and the international system.[1] The Panel's work so far has underlined a clear need for the UN to revamp its approach to internal displacement to, while recognizing the primary responsibility of states, strengthen the quality and accountability of UN action in preventing, responding, and driving solutions to internal displacement. This requires leadership and engagement at the global level, which the Panel examines in a separate paper that explores the possibility of appointing an SRSG on Internal Displacement. It also requires reflecting on whether the humanitarian system is currently optimized for responding to internal displacement (including both for the provision of principled humanitarian assistance and protection as well as in laying the groundwork for solutions), which the Panel similarly explores in a separate paper.[2] Equally, it demands careful examination of UN leadership and coordination for solutions at country-level, which is the focus of this paper.

While this paper looks at the international system specifically, the Panel has separately examined the types of government leadership and coordination systems that most effectively enable solutions. In particular, the Panel has identified the importance of whole-of-government approaches that recognize solutions as a shared, development priority in which all ministries have a critical role to play. To that end, the Panel has also observed that government leadership at the highest political levels can be essential, including to send a clear message to line ministries about the expectations in supporting IDP solutions. Building on these learnings, the models proposed in this paper consistently link back to the role of national and local authorities and propose government leadership or co-leadership of solutions coordination wherever possible.

The contents of this paper do not represent definitive conclusions by the Panel, but rather offer ideas that the Panel believes merit further exploration and debate. The paper is deliberately propositional, and participants are encouraged share their views during the discussion. New ideas will also be very welcome.

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[1] "International system" is used in this context to describe the broader ecosystem of international actors that are involved in prevention, response, and solutions to internal displacement. This could include international NGOs, other non-UN international organizations such as ICRC and IFRC, and development contractors, among others.

[2] These other papers will be made available on the Panel's website in the coming days.

II.   Background

In October 2019, the UN Secretary-General established a High-Level Panel to identify concrete recommendations on how to better prevent, respond, and achieve solutions to internal displacement. The Panel's Terms of Reference emphasize the need to consider ways to unlock situations of protracted displacement and the Panel has identified solutions as a key area of opportunity to drive progress and change.

Drawing on the definition put forward in the IASC Framework for Durable Solutions, the Panel understands durable solutions to be achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. It can be attained through:

- Sustainable reintegration in their place of origin (return);
- Sustainable local integration in the places where IDPs take refuge (local integration); or
- Sustainable integration in another part of the country (settlement elsewhere).

The Panel recognizes that the achievement of solutions is often a gradual, long-term process whereby an IDP progressively escapes the harmful effects of displacement.

At present, the Panel has observed that action on internal displacement is viewed first and foremost as a humanitarian issue. While humanitarian assistance and protection are indeed crucial, the Panel believes that achieving lasting solutions to internal displacement requires going beyond a care and maintenance approach. When the Panel consulted IDPs on their priority needs for solutions, the top three issues they cited were: 1) safety and security, 2) housing, land and property, and 3) livelihoods. Making meaningful progress on these three areas requires a holistic approach and the involvement of actors beyond the humanitarian sphere.

Building on the above, **the Panel believes that solutions are most effective when they are nationally owned.** This national ownership involves not only strong government leadership and the fulfillment of their responsibilities to their citizens and residents, but also the active engagement of IDPs, displacement-affected communities, and local civil society in strategic planning and decision-making. International actors, some of whom have mandated responsibilities in conflict and crisis settings, also have an important role to play.

Even in cases where the government is unable or unwilling to provide leadership in finding solutions to displacement, the UN and other international actors may nevertheless be able to assist in laying the groundwork for solutions. This could include supporting IDPs to access former or new livelihoods, assisting in the recovery of civil documentation (which is often essential to access public education, housing and land tenure, or employment), or even the repair or reconstruction of critical infrastructure. These international actors include the humanitarian community, but solutions should also be recognized as a shared responsibility in which development, peace, and disaster risk reduction actors all have an important role to play. The Panel believes that early, joined up action that builds on the complementary mandates of different actors (i.e. the nexus) is essential for solutions.

At the global level, considerable guidance already exists on durable solutions. This includes the IASC Framework for Durable Solutions, which sets out common benchmarks and operational standards, as well as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which among other elements, reaffirm the criticality

of solutions being voluntary, safe, and dignified, and the right of IDPs to not just return, but also to integrate locally or settle elsewhere.

Drawing on its research and consultations thus far, the Panel believes that effective, lasting solutions hinge on a number of key enablers: state commitment and capacity, effective whole-of-society approaches and the ability of IDPs and affected communities to participate in decision-making and exercise their full rights as citizens, an international system that is fit for purpose for supporting nationally owned solutions, strong data and evidence to inform decision-making, access to livelihoods including through the effective leveraging of the private sector, and appropriate financing.

This paper looks at one part of this landscape: ensuring the international system at country-level is effectively organized to support nationally owned solutions. The other issues highlighted above are addressed by the Panel elsewhere. More specifically, the paper looks at four key issues relating to the international system for solutions at country-level: leadership, coordination, strategic planning and fundraising, and system performance management. This paper puts forward potential recommendations in each of these four areas that are drawn from the Panel's research and consultations thus far.

The Panel recognizes that each context is unique, and in some cases the role of the international system may be minimal – for example, in disaster contexts where the government is in the lead from the outset of a crisis. In other contexts, particularly in conflict settings where the government is a party to the conflict or in cases where the government requests more robust support, the UN and international actors may play a more central role. The ideas proposed in this paper speak to all types of settings, but may be particularly relevant in contexts where the initial humanitarian response is led primarily by the UN. This is explained further below.

III.   UN Leadership on Solutions at Country-Level

The Panel has repeatedly heard that in many internal displacement responses, there is inconsistent leadership for solutions to internal displacement within the UN and international system. This leadership refers to having a clear point of accountability for high-level engagement with the government to drive progress on solutions, the provision of strategic direction within the international system to ensure solutions are prioritized, and the ability to motivate relevant agencies and organizations to engage in joint or joined up action.

In Policy Committee Decision 2011/20, the UN Secretary-General tasked Resident Coordinators (RCs)/ Humanitarian Coordinators to lead in the development of strategies for durable solutions. While some RCs have taken up this responsibility, implementation has been ad hoc. The Panel has identified a number of challenges that it believes prevented more systematic delivery of the 2011 Decision: following the Decision, solutions were not formally integrated as a responsibility in the Terms of Reference of RCs, and support to help RCs fulfill this function was limited. The Early Recovery Cluster, which together with the Protection Cluster was meant to serve as a key support mechanism for the RC on solutions, experienced difficulties in many contexts and was finally abandoned globally. Placing responsibility for solutions with the Clusters also meant that solutions were treated as a humanitarian task, which further entrenched short term approaches and let development, peace, and other actors largely off the hook. There was likewise little accountability for RCs that failed to make solutions a priority. More recently, solutions to internal displacement was not addressed in the UN Development System Reform, and thus have not

benefitted from the same consideration and incorporation into the new "empowered RC" tools and mechanisms. Ultimately, the Policy Committee decision is no longer well known and its validity is being questioned in light of the UN Reform and the fact that the Policy Committee no longer exists.

The Panel believes that the cross-cutting mandate of RCs to oversee humanitarian, development, and peace activities (particularly when also serving as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General) makes them ideally suited to work with the government to provide leadership on solutions. In that context, **the Panel proposes that the UN Secretary-General formally reaffirm RCs as being responsible for providing leadership on solutions within the UN system,** and integrate this responsibility into their TORs and performance assessments. The Panel also strongly encourages resources to be allocated to help RCs fulfill this function, building on positive examples like the provision of solutions advisors to RC Offices (RCOs), or nexus advisors that could be tasked with supporting solutions. If an SRSG on Internal Displacement were established, as the Panel explores in a separate paper, they could likewise provide mentorship and advice to RCs on issues relating to solutions.

In contexts where the government is in the lead of the humanitarian response or in driving progress towards solutions (as is the case in many disaster contexts), the RC would play a primarily supportive role and would provide leadership within the international system by mobilizing and orienting the international community towards solutions – for example, by encouraging UN agencies and NGOs to adopt approaches that work with and through national and local systems wherever possible, prioritize issues such as the restoration of livelihoods and sustainable recovery of housing, land, and property, and avoid entrenching a care and maintenance approach or dependency on humanitarian assistance. In other contexts where the government is unable or unwilling provide effective leadership on solutions, where the government requests the UN to provide more active support, or where government action has simply not materialized, the RC may need to initiate this process and kickstart efforts within the international system to lay the groundwork for solutions. Across all types of contexts, the RCs should also ensure solutions are part of Common Country Analysis processes and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

Question:

- Do you support the idea of formally tasking RC with the responsibility for overseeing solutions to internal displacement within the international system?
    - If so, what steps would be needed to formalize and implement this responsibility? What support do you think would be most needed for them to carry out this function effectively?
    - If not, why?

IV.   Coordination for Solutions

In addition to the need for strengthened leadership on solutions within the international system, the Panel has also observed that there is a need for improved coordination for solutions – namely, clearer strategic and operational collaboration to ensure collective efforts towards solutions.

The Panel has repeatedly heard that solutions often fall through the cracks of the international system at country level. This problem is often partially ascribed to the lack of a dedicated agency for IDPs, but also to how solutions are understood to relate to the responsibilities of different types of international actors. Given the long-term recovery orientation of solutions interventions, they do not fit squarely within the

humanitarian mandate. Equally, however, solutions are rarely fully embraced as a development priority. The result is that at the strategic level, neither the Humanitarian Country Teams, UN Country Teams, nor other development coordination groups at country level have systematically taken responsibility for engaging with local and national authorities to support IDP solutions. Peace (and particularly peacebuilding) actors have also not been systematically engaged. There have been many efforts to strengthen collaboration between different types of actors (initiatives such as the New Way of Working and Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development, among others), but not only has the UN not seen significant change from these endeavors, but the initiatives themselves (as seen in the recent UN Development System Reform) often do not address solutions to internal displacement.

At the operational coordination level, solutions likewise do not have a clear home. The primary operational coordination architecture within the international system for addressing internal displacement is the Cluster System, which was designed to better coordinate humanitarian responses in non-refugee settings. Although solutions were assigned to the Protection and Early Recovery Clusters in the 2011 Policy Committee Decision, in practice the two Clusters and their Lead Agencies (UNHCR and UNDP respectively) never fully assumed this role. The Cluster System is anchored firmly in the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, which, particularly in conflict settings, are an essential framework for enabling humanitarian actors to deliver to people in need regardless of who they are or where they are located. Building on these principles, in situations of conflict the Cluster System often operates largely independently of the government. Development approaches, by contrast, almost always rely on government ownership, which can be challenging for humanitarian actors that strive for neutrality and independence. Linked to this, development actors are also often not present in Cluster mechanisms.

While it is essential that this humanitarian space be preserved where needed, it is important that humanitarian responses and their coordination structures (both at the strategic [i.e. HCT] and operational [i.e. Cluster] levels) also strive to lay the groundwork for solutions. This is achieved both through the types of interventions that are prioritized (for example, ensuring attention to livelihoods and education) as well as through the approach (for example, repairing water systems where possible rather than carrying out indefinite water trucking). Efforts were made to strengthen these types of approaches through the creation of an Early Recovery Cluster, but for a variety of reasons outlined in this evaluation, the Early Recovery Cluster was never able to systematically catalyze efforts towards solutions and was eventually stood down.

Once a situation begins to allow for more active pursuit of solutions, however, greater changes may be needed to the approach – both in relation to which actors lead and have a seat at the solutions table, and in regard to the coordination architecture itself. This begins, first and foremost, by recognizing that solutions go beyond the humanitarian mandate, and should be approached in a manner that promotes national ownership and which adopts a long-term development lens. Such an approach consequently requires a far more central role of the national authorities in the coordination structures (which, as described above, may not be the norm in humanitarian coordination bodies in conflict settings), as well as the presence and participation of development, peace, disaster risk reduction, and private sector actors. It also requires strengthened joint analysis and joint planning across all types of actors.

Building on this, the Panel believes there is a need to explore coordination models that would more effectively enable solutions – ones that are led or co-led by the government wherever possible, which

engage all relevant ministries as part of a whole-of-government approach, and which facilitate collaboration with a broader cross-section of actors. The exact form these coordination models take will invariably be determined by the context and whether the government already has coordination mechanisms in place. In contexts where such mechanisms are not operational, the Panel proposes a few possible models below.

In both disaster and conflict settings, the Panel suggests that one useful model could be **the creation of a cross-sectoral, National Solutions Working Group, accompanied by local, area-based solutions working groups at state or city level.** This approach builds on successful models such as the solutions working groups in Somalia and Ethiopia. The solutions bodies would be activated as early as possible, and in some cases may co-exist with the humanitarian coordination bodies if some parts of the country are still in an acute crisis phase. The Solutions Working Groups (both national and local) should preferably be led or co-led by the government. If the government is not yet able or willing to fill this function, the Solutions Working Groups may need to be initiated by the RC and led by a relevant international actor (e.g. UN or NGO, ideally using existing program staff). The Solutions Working Groups (again both national and local) would be composed of a broad cross section of representatives from the government, internally displaced and displacement-affected communities, local civil society, UN and INGOs, and the private sector. The body should include actors from across the humanitarian, development, peace, and DRR sectors, and should particularly adopt a more long-term development lens. If an SRSG on Internal Displacement were established, they could provide advice and support on the set up and functioning of such working groups, drawing on lessons from other contexts.

A primary responsibility of these Solutions Working Groups would be to lead in joint analysis on solutions and on the development of solutions strategies, operational plans, and appeals, which is addressed in more detail in the following section of this paper. As an area increasingly transitions out of the crisis phase and into an environment more permissive for solutions, these Solutions Working Groups would eventually serve as the primary coordination body, taking over from humanitarian forums. The local Solutions Working Groups would effectively serve as an operational, area-based coordination mechanism and would seek to provide a platform for a collective, cross-sectoral approach to supporting solutions. The local and national Solutions Working Groups would ultimately report to the relevant government actor and the RC.

As a response shifts from a humanitarian approach towards a solutions and development model, it will likewise be important that the humanitarian Clusters similarly evolve, preferably to be led or co-led by the relevant technical ministry (e.g. the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education). These bodies would seek to ensure that international actors transition to working through the existing social systems whenever possible (e.g. public health services or public education systems) to promote more lasting approaches to solutions and recovery. Eventually these bodies may not be needed at all, but in the early transition period when a high volume of humanitarian actors are still present in each sector, it may be valuable to continue the coordination and also actively promote communication between humanitarian and development actors, among others.

Finally, it is important to note that adopting a development-oriented approach to solutions requires development actors to be present and engaged. While in some contexts development actors may have been active before a crisis and may be quick to return once the emergency phase has passed, in other cases (particularly in conflict settings), the Panel has heard that development actors are sometimes slow

to engage and humanitarian actors are left to try to fill the gap. This may be due, in part, to the lack of clear solutions mandate for development agencies. Additionally, where development actors are present, communication and coordination with humanitarian actors is not always consistent and can result in friction over sensitive issues like protection. These issues need to be addressed proactively as part of a strengthened solutions approach, including to consider how to ensure greater responsibility and predictability to the engagement of development actors.

Questions

- Do you believe that there is a need for the UN to be more proactive in transitioning from a humanitarian coordination model to a solutions coordination model where possible?
    - If so, do you see the value in developing a Solutions Coordination Model that could be contextualized on a country-by-country basis?
        - What are your thoughts on convening national and local solutions working groups?
        - What steps can or should be taken to determine when a humanitarian coordination system can transition to one more oriented towards solutions – including to transfer Cluster leadership to government ministries? For example, should there be an HCT assessment every six months?
    - If not, why?
- What is needed to catalyze an earlier and more predictable role for development actors in supporting solutions to internal displacement? Is there a need for development actors to be formally tasked with this responsibility or have it added to their mandates?

V.   Solutions Strategies, Plans, and Appeals

The Panel believes that supporting solutions to internal displacement should be recognized as a core part of development agendas and integrated within national, local, and urban development plans. The Panel also recognizes, however, that this integration takes time and that more immediate solutions strategies, operational plans, and funding appeals may be needed to kickstart solutions processes during the transition period.

Building on the nationally owned solutions orientation that the Panel believes is essential, the Panel encourages governments to **develop national and local solutions strategies** in close collaboration with the UN and international system – notably through the RC at country-level, and with support of the global SRSG as needed**.** These strategies should be based on strong, joint analysis and should set out the overarching vision and priorities for solutions. They should also preferably lay the foundation for incorporating solutions into the development plans. Even if solutions are not immediately feasible in all areas, it may still be possible to facilitate return, integration, or settlement in more stable locations, and to promote self-sufficiency and vulnerability-reduction among those for whom a lasting solution is not yet feasible.[3]

The Panel emphasizes that the process of developing the solutions strategy (including in gathering information and analysis to inform it) is as important as the document itself. The Panel strongly encourages the use of methodologies that place IDPs and affected communities in the lead in identifying

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[3] See pages 21-23 in Breaking the Impasse for more detail: https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Breaking-the-impasse.pdf

the types of interventions that are most critical for them. The Panel also emphasizes the central role of local civil society actors, as well as of the local and national private sector. Within the international community, it is essential that NGOs be recognized as key strategic partners whose engagement and buy-in is essential from the outset.

As a complement to this overarching strategy, the Panel believes that there could be a need for a **costed operational plan that can be translated into an appeal.** Such an appeal could be a critical tool in seeking funding to support solutions efforts, and in providing prospective donors with a clear point of reference for priority needs and coverage. This could follow a similar model to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) process, which while cumbersome, has clear benefits in providing a single point of reference for donors and coordinators alike. Given the humanitarian and lifesaving focus of HRPs, they do not systematically include activities related to solutions. Having a separate Solutions Appeal would ensure that resources from donors' humanitarian budgets are preserved for humanitarian interventions, while enabling solutions interventions to be funded through development budgets and broader sources of funding. Although the majority of development funding is directed through bilateral official development channels, some resources could nevertheless be allocated to catalytic funds to help kickstart the solutions process. The Solutions Appeal would likewise serve as a complement to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which has a more specific focus on the partnership between the government and UN system (without necessarily including local or international NGOs or the private sector).

In the early stages of recovery from a crisis, only a few areas of a country might be considered stable enough included be in the solutions operational plan or appeal. As the situation further stabilizes, however, there should be a progressive, country-wise transition from a humanitarian response approach towards one of solutions and recovery. While investing in solutions might require some additional upfront costs, it should ultimately lead to savings by reducing (and eventually eliminating) the need for recurrent costs associated with the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The RC should use this appeal to support the government in fundraising for solutions, including with development donors and international financial institutions. In tandem, the RC should work with the government to incorporate solutions into the national development plan to enable long-term financing to eventually be channeled through existing development financing mechanisms.

Questions:

- Do you believe that a solutions strategy, costed operational plan, and appeal are useful and should be recommended? Would the benefits of developing such materials justify the processes required to produce them?
    - If so, what considerations would you see in how this is taken forward? How could the process be kept as light as possible while still serving the necessary functions?
    - If not, why? Are there alternative options you would propose?

VI.   Scorecards and System Performance Management

Finally, the Panel believes that once the key responsibilities on internal displacement are understood and incorporated into the TORs of RCs, different actors across the nexus, and coordination bodies, it will be essential that performance in addressing internal displacement (including solutions) be regularly assessed and managed. This could be through the incorporation of internal displacement benchmarks into existing

performance management systems, or through the establishment of separate mechanisms tailored to address internal displacement specifically. Two new tools are proposed below to that end.

First, the Panel is interested in views on the potential value of adopting the use of **self-reported scorecards** for the RC on IDP solutions. The RC would be asked to report at an agreed interval on key solutions benchmarks, including for example, whether a National Solutions Working Group is in place, whether the working group includes representation from each of the key types of actors (including affected communities), and whether a solutions strategy has been developed. The scorecards could be submitted to the Secretary-General's Executive Committee, who would review the outcomes and take action as needed.

A second, and potentially complementary step, would be the increased use of **independent evaluations of UN responses on internal displacement at country-level**. These could be triggered if the results of the scorecard are unsatisfactory, or could be used on a standing, scheduled basis. The evaluations could be carried out by a private consulting firm and should preferably take a 360 approach to assessing actions and achievements. The evaluation should put forward recommendations to the Secretary-General, up to and including the possibility to recommend that key responsibilities at country level be reassigned to different actors if current agencies or individuals are consistently underperforming.

Questions

- Do you believe that an enhanced performance management system for internal displacement and/or solutions is needed within the UN system?
    - If so, what are your views on the options set out above?
    - If not, why?