Internal Displacement as a Development Challenge

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This paper synthesises existing analyses of how to address internal displacement as a development challenge. It begins by describing how internal displacement can be appropriately considered as a development challenge (part 1). It then asks how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be leveraged to promote greater emphasis on addressing internal displacement in the context of sustainable development (part 2). It then examines how development approaches might be integrated within humanitarian work with internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the outset to achieve this objective (part 3). Finally, it summarises the main recommendations resulting from the foregoing analysis for consideration by the High-Level Panel (part 4).

1. Internal displacement as a development issue

Internal displacement is a complex phenomenon with diverse implications for the individuals and societies that it affects, whether as displaced or host communities. Internal displacement has consequences that are immediate. In this regard, we can think, on the one hand, of those concerned with 'protection', i.e. the threats posed to the forcibly displaced by particular risks to their safety or other basic conditions of existence. On the other, forced displacement often results in the need for immediate 'assistance' due to the loss of access to tangible or intangible resources such as shelter, lands and jobs and attendant risks to IDP livelihoods as a result of being forced to displace from their homes. Displacement also affects women and men in different ways and therefore requires tailored assistance and protection in order to best protect their rights and ensure their safety.

Global frameworks on internal displacement squarely acknowledge these protection and assistance concerns. The United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are rooted in individual rights derived mainly from international human rights law that States and other authorities must guarantee.[1] Most of the principles address matters of immediate consequence for IDPs that fall broadly under the rubric of protection and/or assistance, as well as the prevention of displacement in the first place.[2] A similar approach is reflected in the African 'hard' international law on internal displacement - the African Union (AU) Kampala Convention and the Great Lakes Protocol – and in many national IDP laws and policies.[3] This emphasis is crucial and, indeed, much of the response to internal displacement in practice is led by humanitarian entities that focus on addressing the immediate consequences of displacement.

At the same time, internal displacement also has longer-term and more collective consequences. Most evidently, there is a need for those displaced to reintegrate into society, whether at the site of their original homes or elsewhere. IDP policy gives this process a strong grounding in individual rights by conceptualising 'durable solutions' (and thus the end of displacement) essentially as an IDP again being able to enjoy their human rights, which serves as a yardstick for them having overcome the 'specific assistance and protection needs' linked to displacement.[4] Thus, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework outlines eight rights-based criteria for achieving a durable solution: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of

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1   United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement", UN Doc E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, 11 Feb. 1998, Annex, para. 3.

2   *Ibid.*, particularly sections I-III.

3   African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, 49 ILM 86, 23 Oct. 2009 (entry into force: 6 Dec. 2012) (Kampala Convention); Protocol to the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons, 30 Nov. 2006 (entry into force: 21 Jun. 2008). On national laws, see N. Schrepfer, "Addressing Internal Displacement through National Laws and Policies: A Plea for a Promising Means of Protection", *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 24(4), 2012, 667-691.

4   Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Framework: Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, Washington D.C, Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2010, A1.

housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to justice.[5]

The concept of solutions implies a transformative agenda at the societal level. Crucially, the rights on which solutions depend are not free-floating but rather imply a wider set of structures to guarantee them, which may not be functioning (or even exist) in that society and thus need to be modified or even created. Likewise, the fact that IDPs may not have enjoyed these rights prior to displacement suggests a push for societal levelling-up is implicit in this conceptualisation of solutions. In short, the end of displacement is not assessed by reference to the IDP's circumstances before displacement, which might indeed raise questions about how far back in time the assessment should look. Rather, IDP solutions are based on a push to ensure that IDPs enjoy a set of universal rights that, whilst basic in nature, may not actually be generally enjoyed in practice by the wider population of that country.

Other long-term consequences of internal displacement can also be identified as having a collective impact on development at local and national levels, especially in large and protracted displacement scenarios. Firstly, the flight of capital and human resources (lands, businesses, support networks etc.) resulting from displacement destabilises development in areas of origin. Secondly, the arrival of IDPs in a host community brings economic and societal pressures and opportunities that impact on development processes in those areas. Thirdly, the sudden, unplanned and difficult to quantify changes in population distribution due to internal displacement pose a challenge for development plans that are based on pre-displacement assumptions about population and demography. Finally, internal displacement may drive or accelerate other processes of social change (urbanisation, shift in gender values, inter-ethnic mixing etc.) that will shape development in that country long-term.

Researchers and policy-makers are just beginning to acknowledge the wider ways in which internal displacement may shape collective processes of development over the long-term. Even so, a policy consensus is already emerging that internal displacement, at least in contexts of conflict, needs to be treated not only as an issue of short-term protection or assistance but also with long-term development implications. This has led some to argue that such displacement is 'predominantly a development issue with humanitarian elements – and not the other way around'.[6] Whatever the case, in light of increasing evidence that IDPs are among the poorest members of their societies, more emphasis must be placed on ensuring that these long-term development aspects of internal displacement are integrated into the IDP response, particularly if solutions are to be pursued.

2. Fit with the SDGs

The fact that IDPs are often 'left behind' in this way means that addressing internal displacement is crucial if affected countries are to make progress in achieving sustainable development. The pledge to 'leave no one behind' is a key plank of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which UN Member States agreed 17 SDGs, each with its set of targets and indicators.[7] The SDGs do not include specific targets on IDPs but they do acknowledge IDPs as a 'vulnerable group' in need of particular attention in efforts to implement the SDGs.[8] Moreover, all of the SDGs are relevant to internal displacement and many are directly related (particularly SDGs 1-6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16 and

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5   *Ibid.*, A3-4.

6   N. Harild, "Forced Displacement: A Development Issue with Humanitarian Elements", *Forced Migration Review*, 52, 2016, 4-7, 5.

7   United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Resolution 70/1, UN Doc. A/RES/70/1, 21 Oct. 2015.

8   *Ibid.*, para 23.

17).[9] For instance, SDG 1 (no poverty) is directly relevant as 'IDPs tend to be the poorest people in their countries and poverty increases the likelihood of renewed displacement'.[10]

States affected by internal displacement increasingly recognise the link between displacement and development in their annual voluntary national reviews (VNR), a follow-up mechanism for reporting progress against the SDGs. Not all of these States publish VNRs but, annually, the tendency is for a steady increase in the number of VNRs that acknowledge this link and address it in ever-greater depth, especially for conflict-related displacement.[11] In tandem, the Sendai Framework, which complements the SDGs by outlining action to protect development gains from disaster risks, aims to reduce the number of people affected by disasters, including the displaced, by 2030. A review of national disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies adopted in line with this target found that more than a third specifically refer to displacement in this disaster context.[12] By contrast, still too few States are making a direct link between internal displacement and implementing the SDGs in their national development policies.[13]

3. Integrating development approaches in work with IDPs

Attempts to integrate development approaches into humanitarian work have a long but inconclusive trajectory, particularly in the refugee field.[14] Yet, at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, renewed impetus was provided by the UN Secretary-General's call to humanitarian and development actors to work collaboratively to pursue interventions with 'a clear and measurable collective outcome' and by the endorsement of this 'New Way of Working' (NWoW) by many of those actors. Since then, a range of initiatives have been launched within the humanitarian and development architecture of the UN and beyond to link support to IDPs with achieving progress on sustainable development, even as institutional challenges remain in the form of certain persisting structural and funding silos and enduring perceptions of IDP needs as basically short-term and not long-term in nature.[15]

Research on IDP interventions that have tried to integrate humanitarian and development efforts, whether informed by this NWoW or under earlier nexus concepts, have produced a number of important preliminary findings and recommendations that can be summarised as follows.[16]

Firstly, within the humanitarian and development architecture, considerable room remains for closer coordination and cooperation to be institutionalised. Nonetheless, this may be facilitated by the strengthening of structures that allow for the creation within wider strategies of situation-specific multi-year common programme frameworks with well-defined lead roles and overall objectives. It should be based on a joint assessment and analysis by humanitarian and development actors, with specialist local knowledge input, to build on the respective comparative advan-

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9   A. Debarre & M. Rahmaty, *Reaching Internally Displaced Persons to Achieve the 2030 Agenda*, Brief, New York, IPI, Nov. 2018, 5.

10   *Ibid.*

11   Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020*, Geneva, IDMC, 2021, 71.

12   *Ibid.*

13   For examples, see G. Zeender, "The Sustainable Development Goals and IDPs", *Forced Migration Review*, 59, 2018, 24-26, 25-26. For a more in-depth analysis of Iraq and Nigeria, see Debarre & Rahmaty, *Reaching IDPs*, 8-12.

14   Zeender, "The SDGs", 24. For earlier examples such as the zonal development approach, see L. Holborn, *Refugees: A Problem of Our Time: The Work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951-1972*, Metuchen N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1975.

15   Debarre & Rahmaty, *Reaching IDPs*, 5-8.

16   The recommendations in this section collate those in the following sources: G. Zeender & B.J. Crowther, *Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement: A Snapshot of Successful humanitarian-Development Initiatives*, New York, OCHA, 2017; Debarre & Rahmaty, *Reaching IDPs*; Zeender, "The SDGs"; W. Kälin & H. Entwisle Chapuisat. *Breaking the Impasse. Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement as a Collective Outcome*, New York, OCHA, 2017; C. Beyani, N. Krynsky Baal & M. Caterina, "Conceptual Challenges and Practical Solutions in Situations of Internal Displacement", *Forced Migration Review*, 52, 2016, 39-42; Harild, "Forced Displacement"

tages of a diverse set of actors, including those from the private sector. Moreover, particularly for humanitarian actors, a clear exit strategy needs to be built-in early in the process and strong coordination with the national and local government promoted, where possible, in order to facilitate government ownership and take-up over the longer-term.

Secondly, there is widespread consensus that the issue of internal displacement and attention to IDP needs must be properly integrated into national and local development policy, planning and budgets by States affected by internal displacement. Toward this end, both humanitarian and development actors should systematically remind national and local governments of their obligations vis-à-vis IDPs, with all actors advocating and reinforcing both economic as well as social and political rights. For their part, in designing IDP-inclusive development policies, these authorities should ensure that the IDP data that they use for planning purposes is reliable and takes account of the voices of those affected by internal displacement (see further below). Governments in these countries should also designate a high-level focal point to coordinate action among relevant ministries, national and international partners and IDPs to lead efforts to integrate IDPs in national development plans. For donor governments, it is appropriate to consider the creation of multi-year funding schemes that can be channelled to both humanitarian and development ends.[17]

Thirdly, for both government and other interventions, there is a need to gather 'development-relevant' IDP data. This is necessary to map the direct and indirect economic, social, environmental and political impact of the particular situation of internal displacement. In this regard, it is often useful to gather comparative data not only on the displaced but also on other relevant groups, such as hosts, those who did not displace and even other kinds of internal migrants to identify where acute shared needs exist and also where internal displacement has had a differential impact, as well as the 'knock-on' effects of such displacement. Data on the qualitative experience of displacement, which takes account of the voices of IDPs, host and others, will often be useful in showing the real prospects for particular collective outcomes (and reflect the need to consider solutions other than just return). Likewise, any mapping should investigate not only the burden created by displacement but also any potential opportunities that may be created for the displaced or their hosts.

Fourthly, in general, interventions need to be context-specific and designed in a flexible way to adapt over time and respond to the evolving needs of IDPs. Yet there is no need to wait until conflict is fully resolved or disaster impact ceased: even in areas of ongoing conflict, measures can be taken to reduce IDP vulnerability and impoverishment. At times, it will be appropriate to take an area-based approach that benefits IDPs and other local populations (and includes both in planning) and to prioritise actions that strengthen the resilience of IDPs and host communities by investing in livelihoods, stable housing and access to basic services, in light of local business and market needs. However, this will usually need to be balanced with special attention for particularly vulnerable groups, who should be identified on the basis of evidence rather than assumptions. Where displacement has an urban face, it is vital to include strong urban planning elements to pursue IDP solutions as part of urban poverty reduction strategies and to integrate IDP settlements in city-wide urban planning and provide innovative housing solutions. Mobility itself is often a livelihood and protective strategy and it is vital to take account of the right of IDPs to move freely.

Finally, it is important to highlight a longstanding concern among humanitarian actors that engaging in the kind of collaboration that exists between development actors and governments may weaken their ability to observe the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, especially since such studies emphasise strengthening

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17   See A. Al-Mahaidi, "Innovative Financing Solutions for Addressing Internal Displacement: Ideas from Current Thinking and Practice", IDRP (forthcoming).

government capacity at all levels as crucial to development work on internal displacement. In practice, this tension is not easily resolved. At least, though, it should be ensured that any collective outcomes formulated in this context by humanitarian and development actors are in line with applicable international standards (and, where appropriate, higher national standards) on IDP protection and assistance, as articulated in instruments such as the Guiding Principles, IASC Framework and Kampala Convention.

4. Conclusions

Internal displacement can have a long-term collective impact on sustainable development at local, national and international levels. In order to make progress towards achieving the SDGs and ensure that 'no one is left behind', States and other key humanitarian and development actors need to work more consistently to address the longer-term collective challenges that internal displacement poses. In this regard, drawing on the existing body of evidence and analysis, this paper has highlighted five key areas with which humanitarian and development actors need to engage in order to better integrate development approaches in the response to internal displacement.

Firstly, incipient efforts to improve coordination and cooperation between the humanitarian and development architecture in the UN and beyond must be strengthened and further institutionalised, including in relation to IDPs. Secondly, in countries affected by widespread or protracted internal displacement, State development plans at national and sub-national levels need to take properly take account of the ensuing development challenges and opportunities, and donor States should support this shift, if there is to be progress towards achieving the SDGs. Thirdly, a more focused and participative approach to gathering and using 'development-relevant' data on internal displacement that integrates both humanitarian and development concerns is needed. Fourthly, development approaches to internal displacement need to be built into wider interventions from the start of the crisis and rooted in local circumstances but with sufficient flexibility to respond to changes in the situation on the ground. Finally, development strategies and outcomes need to be compatible with applicable international standards on IDP protection and assistance, including their rights to mobility and non-discrimination, and due attention to particular vulnerabilities among affected persons.