



Submission by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

Denmark welcomes the invitation to contribute to the important work of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. The present submission is focused on key issues, problems, and imperatives, which should be prioritized by the Panel in its analysis of the crisis of internal displacement today and how prevention, response at large, and solutions can be effectively advanced. We are primarily addressing issues and initiatives related to conflict-induced displacement but much is relevant for disaster-induced displacement as well. We are pleased to confirm our support for the submission by the Platform for Disaster Displacement.

The point of departure

The starting point for any efforts related to internally displaced persons should be the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which restate and compile human rights and humanitarian law relevant to internally displaced persons. Among others, the principles make it clear that protection and assistance for internally displaced persons is primarily a state responsibility towards own citizens and a question of respect for human rights.

Similarly, reference may be made to the inter-governmentally agreed text in the New York Declaration paragraph 20, noting the need for reflection on effective strategies to ensure adequate protection and assistance for internally displaced and to prevent and reduce such displacement, and to the Kampala Convention.

As IDPs are a state responsibility, what are the implications for the HLP?

In respect of internal displacement, state responsibility is obviously highly complex. It is not simply a question of political will or lack thereof. Rather, weak governance in one form or another is often a central driver of displacement. Whether governments are unable to enforce their monopoly on legitimate use of violence, are unwilling or fail to deliver basic, social services and to ensure respect for human rights or are themselves perpetrators of violence, bad governance (including corruption) breeds insecurity and displacement. Further, geopolitics, big power rivalry, and proxy wars have played important parts or have been instrumental in contemporary conflicts resulting in large-scale humanitarian crises and displacement. Such complexities clearly show that prevention of and solutions to internal displacement very much require political actions by states (both at national and sub-national levels), often based on dialogue with and support from the international community. That obviously entails limitations in respect of what the HLP can realistically accomplish. Below we offer some initial thoughts on this.

– The need for expectation management

A first step concerns expectation management among all those stakeholders involved in the HLP's efforts and subsequent follow-up. Although the situation in certain countries may offer some prospects, the HLP can generally only hope to influence political will in a positive direction to a rather limited extent and in an indirect manner. This is a clear indicator that strong expectation management is of critical importance for the HLP as is the fact that at a general level very little progress has been secured in terms of prevention, response and solutions to internal displacement since the development of the IDP Guiding Principles in 1998. In short, there needs to be a pragmatic and open assessment of what can realistically

be achieved and what cannot, and this needs to be communicated to all stakeholders throughout the process.

– *Don't reinvent the wheel – build on existing resources and identify a pragmatic way forward*

In view of the above limitations, the overriding objective for the HLP must be to promote the willingness and ability of relevant stakeholders to whenever possible seize opportunities for prevention, solutions, and improved outcomes for internally displaced before, during, and after conflict. Therefore, it would seem relevant for the HLP to focus on:

- Generating enhanced awareness of the challenges related to internal displacement, this being an important part of the SDG agenda of Leaving No One Behind;
- Developing a toolbox, based on already existing lessons learned, principles, agreements, and frameworks that can be of use when developing concrete operational initiatives in countries where the political will is present;
- In pursuit of this, designing a realistic, operational mechanism for future follow-up at the country-level in the event that opportunities for an improved response or solutions emerge.

Such an approach would appear to involve:

- Establishing the basic elements that should be considered in any type of response to internal displacement;
- Mapping of relevant international and regional strategies, legal frameworks, agreements, resolutions, and similar frameworks;
- Identifying existing knowledge products and gaps therein – and initiate activities to address such gaps;
- Establishing the guiding framework for a follow-up mechanism that can ensure implementation of the recommendations and capitalize on the outcomes of the HLP.

Some basic elements

Affected governments must be in the lead

It follows from the centrality of state responsibility that affected governments must be in the driving seat for any attempt to develop appropriate responses to internal displacement. While humanitarian assistance must be guided by the humanitarian principles, all other types of engagement need to be based on this principle, which for the same reason is also at the heart of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Given this, it is of key importance to understand what may drive political will and how that is best supported. There are examples where local and national authorities have been instrumental in pushing for improved outcomes to internal displacement, even during protracted crisis, e.g. through the Durable Solutions Initiative in Somalia, and possibly also Ethiopia and Afghanistan, where displacement is recognized within the national development framework. Analyzing in details the driving forces and actual results of such experiences would therefore seem relevant.

Argue consistently and forcefully for coherent approaches across the HDP nexus

The Global Compact on Refugees' focus on easing pressure on host communities, enhancing self-reliance, local solutions, and supporting conditions for safe, voluntary, and dignified return is equally relevant for IDP situations. This truly calls for a coherent approach across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, guided by joint analysis and objectives among involved stakeholders.

This is further underlined by the fact that while the initial cause for displacement gives rise to particular protection problems and vulnerabilities, over time IDPs often end up in a situation similar to that of other marginalized and vulnerable groups in society. In such cases, the response should be framed within broader poverty alleviation strategies, i.e. as part of a national development agenda.

Therefore, the HLP should build explicitly on the OECD-DAC Guidelines that are now part of the basis for future peer reviews of donors, and that highlight the need to:

- Strengthen collaboration, coherence, and complementarity across the respective mandates of humanitarian, development, and peace actors at all levels;
- Promote simultaneous engagement and shared responsibility to reduce the likelihood and impact of recurrent and protracted crises by attending to immediate and critical needs of forcibly displaced or otherwise negatively affected populations, reducing chronic vulnerabilities, structural challenges, and the risks to sustained peace;
- Be conflict sensitive and doing no harm to the establishment of humanitarian space;
- And that engagement in the HDP nexus should be context-specific, based on respective mandates, governing principles, and modes of action and on stakeholders' comparative advantages, common or shared, multi-stakeholder analysis, shared planning, and the common pursuit of collective outcomes.

While many agree on the need for an HDP-nexus approach, it also needs to be recognised that integrating the P of the nexus is often particularly difficult and can be controversial. The HLP could probably benefit from engaging in dialogue with relevant actors that have hands-on experience from pragmatic approaches, seeking local solutions to concrete problems along with “harder” peace and security approaches, depending on the context.

Recognise the need for a whole-of-society approach

While governments must be in the lead to ensure sustainability, it is critical that the response to displacement is designed and implemented through a whole-of-society approach that reaches out to all parts of society, including religious leaders, the private sector, civil society actors, along with affected communities.

Resist proposals to focus on humanitarian assistance

Humanitarian actors, including international and national NGOs, are crucial in responding to protection needs among internally displaced and all other vulnerable groups, once conflict has broken out and for as long as it persists. Although humanitarian actors can help facilitate progress through meeting basic protection needs until national systems are able to take over, they cannot by themselves ensure prevention or secure lasting solutions to internal displacement. Firstly, it depends entirely on political processes that they are not part of. Secondly, humanitarian assistance is bound by the humanitarian imperative and focuses on responding to needs and vulnerabilities, irrespective of the status of affected people. Seeking to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian action in respect of one particular group, such as IDPs, may affect the provision of assistance to other groups in equal need. Thirdly, humanitarian assistance is chronically underfunded, and as humanitarian crises continue to grow in scale and complexity, humanitarian assistance will increasingly be unable to meet all needs among vulnerable groups, including IDPs but also refugees, displaced people who have returned and those who have remained in conflict-affected areas. This also serves to underpin the importance of an HDP approach.

Ensure the required protection focus

The specific protection needs of IDPs (including returnees) need to be recognized and responded to by humanitarian, development, peace and stabilization actors within the framework of overall response

strategies and operations. Apart from raising general awareness, the HLP can contribute to this by reviewing relevant guidance and planning material, e.g. from the OECD, relevant UN agencies and coordination mechanisms (including the IASC) and the World Bank along with other development actors, to assess whether it is sufficiently sensitive to internal displacement, including with respect to age, gender, diversity and disability-related protection needs. Denmark supports the joint AGD submission put forward by WRC, Plan International etc.

Highlight the need to focus much more on conflict prevention

Conflict prevention requires investing much more time and resources in developing conflict-sensitive approaches, inspired by the humanitarian principles of “doing no harm” and “leaving no one behind” and based on a solid political economy analysis. For development actors, the aim should be to exercise much more self-discipline and self-awareness in terms of who, what, and where they provide assistance in vulnerable contexts and for what purposes. Sometimes they should consider whether to provide any at all.

Highlight the need for accountability towards and participation by affected populations

A properly integrated approach with broad inclusion of affected populations is crucial for finding solutions and ensuring downward accountability. The HLP should promote this and walk the talk through engaging in direct consultations with IDPs themselves.

Be concise in the use of core concepts

Conceptual clarity is of the outmost importance when the objective is to formulate global recommendations. There is at times a tendency to confuse ways of working (humanitarian / development / peace) with thematic areas (conflict prevention / climate change / disaster risk reduction etc.). As an example, climate change action that helps prevent internal displacement (and IDP interventions conscious of climate change) will be just as crucial for the H, as for the D and the P, and being clear about the concepts will advance their integration.

This also relates to the fact that as the HLP is mandated to deal with both internal displacement as a consequence of conflict and violence as well as in the context of climate change and natural disasters, due consideration should be paid to overlaps as well as differences. In some cases, drivers and solutions may not be of the same nature. In other cases, internal displacement due to conflict and due to climate change/natural disasters overlap and interact, e.g. when ethnic conflict is caused by drought.

Explore alternative funding strategies and new ways of engaging with the local and international private sector

In recognition of the fact that traditional ODA will be insufficient, the HLP may explore the potential for accessing reliable, predictable and multi-year additional funding through various innovative financing instruments, including investment guarantees, insurance schemes, social bonds, and the like.

Innovative financing is an important aspect of the recognized need for developing innovative partnerships with the local and international private sector as part of development cooperation efforts. The HLP may seek to identify sectors where this could be of particular use in respect of supporting solutions for internal displacement, e.g. in terms of investing in agricultural livelihoods through value chain approaches and strengthened access to markets, public-private partnerships, support for micro-finance based on investment guarantees, etc.

Identify knowledge products and gaps

Mapping of existing resources

There is a wealth of guidance material of relevance to the IDP agenda from a broad range of stakeholders. First and foremost, the HLP is advised to base itself on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) as a guiding framework. Though applicable to refugees, the GCR-approach is of direct relevance for the response to internal displacement – for affected governments, donors, humanitarian and development actors along with other relevant stakeholders, including academia and the private sector. All these stakeholders were part of the preparatory process towards the GCR and have to quite an extent committed themselves to work on the basis of GCR objectives, principles, and guidance.

Additional resources of relevance include but are not limited to:

- The OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus;
- World Bank strategies and knowledge products related to fragility and displacement (including: the World Bank Group *Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence* (2020), the Flagship report “*Forcibly Displaced Toward a development approach supporting refugees, the internally displaced, and their hosts*” (2016), and other knowledge products from the Global Programme on Forced Displacement and KNOMAD;
- The EU Communication “*Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance*” (2016);
- Recommendations from EGRIS;
- Analytical products, reports and related resources from the Joint Data Centre, JIPS, IDMC, GP20, PDD, and the Special Rapporteur on human rights of IDPs along with her predecessors;
- The joint UNHCR/Danida evaluation of the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDIP) and related analytical products
- Relevant UNGA and HRC resolutions on internal displacement;
- Experiences from other initiatives, such as the Solutions Alliance, that fed into the GCR.

Mapping the potential contributions from these and other resources through a meta study could be a beneficial exercise, not only for the HLP but also for wider stakeholders. Further, it could prove a solid basis for pursuing a direct dialogue with these stakeholders on how to ensure the best use of their respective guidance material in respect of IDP responses and within the framework of the HLP.

Identifying knowledge gaps and ways to deal with that

There appears to be a strong need for an open-ended and forward looking dialogue on gaps, shortcomings and challenges related to data and evidence in respect of internal displacement. Engaging in a dialogue with the above knowledge sources will be helpful in this regard, but efforts also need to include national statistical departments, humanitarian and development actors, and relevant academia.

Apart from an improved estimation of actual numbers and related demographics, the focus should also include refined approaches to displacement-sensitive socio-economic analysis at household levels with a view to identifying specific vulnerabilities and capacities as a basis for improved responses by governments with the support of development actors.

Assess the relevance of a more pragmatic approach to measuring displacement

While the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement state principles related to return, resettlement and reintegration, there appears to be a lack of a clear *operational* definition of when internal displacement has ended. Prevailing thinking often lists a range of sound criteria, which however may be difficult to meet or measure in developing countries recovering from conflict or disaster, and this means that the number of IDPs continue to climb. Thereby, progress ends up being elusive, even

though some of those counted as IDPs in fact and as noted above find themselves in situations that in many if not most ways resemble that of other vulnerable groups in their country. In this light, a more pragmatic approach for defining progress towards solutions would seem desirable, i.e. one that takes its point of departure in overall progress with regard to basic social, economic, and legal rights and conditions in a given country. It would be useful if the HLP could contribute to initiating a debate on this, not least if this could lead to a reassessment of the number of people affected by conflict- and disaster-induced displacement worldwide.

Establish the guiding framework for a follow-up mechanism

Sustainable progress in respect of solutions to internal displacement will also hinge on a continuing roll-out of recommendations from the HLP upon completion of its mandate. This would seem to call for establishing a guiding framework for operational follow-up at the national level in countries affected by internal displacement. By default, this ultimately has to be led by national governments – but generally, the framework is also likely to depend on a whole-of-society approach to identifying actors with relevant leverage that may contribute to an improved response to internal displacement one way or another. This could be e.g. be religious, ethnic and political leaders, private sector actors and the like.

While the concrete design of such a follow-up mechanism is likely to be contextual, inspiration can be sought in how the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) embedded in the Global Compact on Refugees has been taken forward at both regional and national level. Similarly, there were useful lessons learned from the Solutions Alliance that helped inspire the CRRF. Both sought to create contextualized platforms for joint analysis, collaboration, coordination, and other forms of dialogue between government authorities and humanitarian and development actors, and guidance material was worked out to this end. In essence, this approach builds on the recognition that dialogue and trust-building is fundamental for effective burden and responsibility sharing in the response to displacement, without which there will no progress towards solutions to internal displacement.