



Organisation Internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA)  
The International Organization for the LDCs (IOLDCs)

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

### Internal Displacement – Overview - Trends and Challenges

On 17 April 1998, the Commission on Human Rights adopted the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. These remain the most widely recognized standard to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement. The unprecedented volume and duration of internal displacement today reminds us that much more work needs to be done and that long-term solutions for those displaced are fewer and harder to come by.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in its 2018 Global Trends report starkly reflected that “*Today one in every 108 people on earth is displaced*”, indicating the continued escalation in global forced displacement. The report documented that “70.8 million people were forcibly displaced” at the end of 2018, “each with their own story to tell, each with a life or family uprooted, broken or lost.”

Internal displacement is also heavily concentrated in a few countries and triggered by few events. 28 million new internal displacements associated with conflict and disasters across 148 countries and territories were recorded in 2018. Persistently high levels of new displacement each year coupled with increasingly protracted crises across the globe left 2018 with the highest number of IDPs ever recorded. Despite policy progress in several countries, the root causes of internal displacement remain inadequately addressed.

Cyclical and protracted displacement continues to be driven by political instability, chronic poverty and inequality, environmental and climate change. Many IDPs are returning to insecure areas with few socio-economic opportunities. Instead of creating the conditions for lasting solutions, this is recreating conditions of risk and increasing the likelihood of crises erupting again in the future.

Armed conflicts and persecution are driving a record number of people from their homes. At the start of 2019, some 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced. In 2018, 13.6 million people were newly displaced by conflict, violence or human rights violations – an average of 37,000 people every day. Natural disasters triggered a further 17.2 million new displacements, often in the same countries. Twenty-eight of the 50 countries with the highest numbers of new displacements faced both conflict and disaster-induced displacement. The majority of forcibly displaced people remain within their own countries. At the start of 2019, there were 41.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), the highest

number on record. Conflicts and violence caused 10.8 million new internal displacements in 2018. The majority in just three countries: Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Syria.

The GP20 Plan of Action, a multi-stakeholder 3-year plan (2018–2020), launched on the 20th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People (IDPs), urged the humanitarian and international community to do more to prevent the conditions that lead to displacement as well as advancing protection and solutions for IDPs.

### **Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the IDP Challenge**

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are among the countries with the highest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). As of 31 of December 2018, among the 47 LDCs, twenty-one were in the situation where they had international displacement as a consequence of violence and conflict, and

43 had IDPs as a result of disasters. The number in December 2018 of IDPs because of violence and conflicts in the LDCs was 18 623 500. Protracted crises, communal violence and unresolved governance challenges are the main factors behind 10.8 million new displacements associated with conflict and violence.

### **Humanitarian needs and requirements**

Conflict is the main driver of escalating needs, but in many places, people face a combination of conflict and climatic events. One of the first measurable consequences is food insecurity, which has risen in virtually every country.

Globally, at the start of 2019 some 821 million people were undernourished, including 113 million who suffered from acute hunger. Conflict is the key driver of hunger. By the beginning of 2019, armed conflicts and persecution had driven a record number of nearly 71 million people from their homes.

The prediction is that some 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, representing 1 in about 45 people in the world, the highest figure in decades. The UN and partner organizations to assist nearly 109 million of the most vulnerable people in 53 countries will require funding of \$28.8 billion.

Current trends, projections show that more than 200 million people could be in need of assistance by 2022. Highly violent conflicts are causing widespread hunger, displacement, death and destruction around the world.

Hunger disproportionately affects Africa. Almost half of the people (33 million) facing acute hunger where conflict and insecurity was the main driver, reside in Africa. Climate and natural disasters pushed another 23 million people into situations of acute food insecurity – representing 80 per cent of those suffering from climate-induced hunger globally.



Climate variability and extremes are key drivers of the recent rise in global hunger and among the leading causes of severe food crises. The impact of climate change disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable. The impact is particularly devastating where conflict and climatic events come together. In sub-Saharan Africa, combinations of conflict, floods, droughts and other natural hazards resulted in a doubling of internal displacements between 2015 and 2018.

Regrettably, climate adaptation efforts are not prioritized as a part of humanitarian response, which in five highly disaster-vulnerable countries between 2016 and 2018, was found to represent only 3 per cent of projects included in inter-agency appeals in the countries concerned and less than half of these received funding. Within the scope of humanitarian action, anticipating climate-related crises and acting early can help mitigate the impact of climate on other political, demographic and socioeconomic pressures and, ultimately, save people's lives and livelihoods.

### **The Gender and Health Impact**

At the beginning of 2019, there were 41 active highly violent conflicts, an increase from 36 at the beginning of the previous year. Dozens of these highly violent conflicts are causing widespread hunger, displacement, death and destruction around the world. Aid workers are facing growing risks and health workers and health facilities are under attack, putting millions of people at risk by denying them access to vital care and aid.

Attacks on schools and medical facilities prevent children from accessing education and interrupt vital health services. Millions are forced to flee their homes in search of safety. Children under age 18 make up a third of the world's population, but account for half of all refugees and 40 per cent of those internally displaced by conflict and violence, which include death, injuries, sexual violence, abductions, and the recruitment and their use in hostilities.

Women and girls are at higher risk of sexual violence. While Gender-based violence (GBV) exists everywhere in the world, women and girls in disasters, armed conflict and other situations of violence face increased risks of rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, early and forced marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking. Nine out of the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage are fragile. Women and girls in situations of displacement are also more vulnerable to trafficking, rape and other forms of sexual assault. Despite the scale and severity of GBV in emergencies, prevention and response continue to be underresourced.

Protracted crises, displacement and climate change are placing millions of people at increased risk of diseases. Active conflict, weak health systems, poor water and sanitation, and lack of access to vaccinations increase the prevalence of some infectious diseases, while making others harder to control. Disease outbreaks apart from worsening humanitarian needs also demand more resources and make responses more complex.



Humanitarian responses can and do prevent and reduce the number of cases and deaths from infectious diseases through prompt and effective diagnosis and treatment, but the root causes need to be tackled. Scaling up vaccination programmes, investing in local health systems and increasing the safety of health-care facilities and workers will be critical to reduce caseloads and manage future risks.

Infectious diseases are not gender neutral and the biological sex of a person can impact the exposure to a disease, as well as the severity and treatment. Some diseases are particularly severe for pregnant women, or may affect unborn children. Gender roles can also have a significant impact on exposure to viruses and access to health care. Women and girls are more likely than men to be caregivers for the sick, which increases their susceptibility to diseases that are transmitted by close contact, such as Ebola. They are often responsible for collecting water and preparing food, increasing their exposure to diseases such as cholera. In certain regions, women and girls are more vulnerable to contracting HIV due to greater exposure to sexual violence, exploitation and other harmful sociocultural factors.

### **Economic Impact**

Slower economic growth and debt problems are entrenching humanitarian needs, *as* although the world's economy continues to grow, the gains are uneven. Sixty-five of the 77 countries where undernourishment increased, experienced an economic slowdown or downturn. The majority (52 out of 65) of the countries are highly dependent on primary commodities, making them particularly vulnerable to price fluctuations.

Countries with weak governance and institutions, or facing armed conflict, civil unrest or instability, are those particularly vulnerable to the impact of economic decline.

### **Regional Overviews: Asia and the Pacific**

Asia and the Pacific remains the world's most disaster-prone region. Three out of every four people affected by a natural disaster live in the Asia-Pacific, which is vulnerable to both sudden and slow-onset events, such as earthquakes, typhoons/cyclones, flooding, volcanoes, and food shortages. Climate change and environmental risks further aggravate the potential for large disasters. More than one quarter of the world's conflicts occur in Asia and the Pacific, and in recent years violence has intensified.

The region's vulnerability has led governments to make disaster management a priority, which has culminated, over the past decade, in the establishment in most countries in the region of national disaster management authorities and investment in national systems that are increasingly capable of managing small- and medium-scale disasters. The region nevertheless remains highly vulnerable to large-scale disasters that could overwhelm in-country capacities and require international humanitarian assistance. In addition to the growth in national capacities, prominent bilateral response arrangements and regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are contributing to a more diverse response system. Japan and China are also playing active roles in international networks, such as the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and the WHO Emergency Medical Teams initiative, that make important



contributions to global humanitarian mechanisms. Others in the region are also increasingly becoming aid providers.

### **Eastern and Southern Africa Southern Africa**

Climate change is compounding deep-rooted poverty, economic inequality and political instability in Southern Africa, leading to a rise in humanitarian needs. Almost 12.8 million people are internally displaced across the region due to conflict or climatic shocks. Ethiopia and Somalia are notable examples where significant displacement occurred in 2019.

Emerging reports are of trends by families adopting extreme coping mechanisms, including child labour, child trafficking, early marriage and transactional sex.

In 2019, 27.8 million people were severely food insecure in the sub-region. Preventable diseases remain endemic, and outbreaks are exacerbated by conflict and climatic shocks.

Predictions are of climatic shocks becoming a major driver of humanitarian needs. In addition, there is a rise in food insecurity the result of a combination of conflict, extreme weather and economic shocks.

### **Latin America and the Caribbean**

Latin America and the Caribbean is the second-most disaster-prone region. The impacts of climate change shocks compound existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities and deep economic inequity. Although relatively well prepared to respond to disasters, South America remains vulnerable to extreme weather events. Caribbean islands have stepped up preparedness efforts, including nurturing strategic relationships with local and sub-regional response partners. Changing climate patterns have made readiness a key strategic priority.

### **Middle East and North Africa**

The main drivers of humanitarian needs across the region remain protracted armed conflict and violence, frequently fuelled by political, social and economic grievances or geopolitical tensions.

Some countries in the region are also vulnerable to natural disasters or extreme climate events, including earthquakes, drought and flooding, and to epidemics, such as cholera. More than 20 million people have been displaced at some stage in recent years, many of them multiple times, either internally or as refugees to neighboring countries.

Conflict, combined with economic decline and lack of sustainable livelihoods, has exhausted individual and community coping mechanisms, in many cases resulting in high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. The generosity of many donors notwithstanding, continued funding constraints have also affected the ability of humanitarian organizations to respond to urgent needs.

### **West and Central Africa**

These are among the most risk-prone regions in the world. Climate change, extreme poverty, rapid population growth and insecurity are driving high levels of vulnerability.



Violent conflict, forced displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, epidemics and environmental shocks continue to devastate communities.

Although governments and local authorities across the region are making efforts to strengthen social cohesion, restore basic services, and improve security, humanitarian needs in the region remain high and are likely to increase.

Response plans across the region remain significantly underfunded and humanitarians are forced to undertake challenging prioritization exercises in an environment of long-standing critical gaps.

### **IDPs and the Data Challenge**

Data is scarce as many IDPs remain unaccounted for which prevents an accurate assessment of the true scale of internal displacement in countries. Estimating returns also continues to be a major challenge. The number of people displaced by slow-onset disasters worldwide remains unknown as only drought-related displacement is captured in some countries, and only partially.

Filling the significant data, analysis and capacity gaps is imperative to progress. Only around a quarter of global internal displacement data is geo-referenced and little to no information exists on the duration and severity of displacement across contexts and demographic groups. These gaps prevent the development of strategies to end or reduce the risk of displacement and mean that too many IDPs are still falling between the cracks of protection and assistance.

### **Partnership Value with The International Organization for the LDCs (IOLDCs)**

This call for submission and inputs has rightly identified that ending displacement remains an elusive quest. Precious little information exists on how and when durable solutions are being achieved, and how people and states are progressing toward them. Growing evidence is that the obstacles to IDPs integrating locally are mostly political.

The International Organization for the LDCs (IOLDCs) is eager to submit recommendations in response to the UN Secretary General's call and wishes to express its willingness and preparedness to contribute and engage in step-up actions, should we be called upon. IOLDCs' interest in this exercise would be particularly pertinent as it has as mission to work for the empowerment and development of Least Developed Countries, particularly endangered by conflicts, poverty, diseases, inequality and climate change. Our priority is to eliminate the constraints and obstacles caused by chronic conflict situations in crisis-affected LDCs, which severely affect the ability to pursue and establish sustainable development. We believe that working together with the international community and all the stakeholders concerned, including civil society, we can achieve conflict-prevention, post-conflict and peace-building, which is believed would pave the way for peace, stability and sustainable development in LDCs. Through advocacy and training activities, we focus on particular SDGs that would enable LDCs attain sustainable development status and improve their human rights situations and the welfare of their populations.





### **Existing Response Plans : Delivering Better**

Improved analysis and tools are enabling responses to be better prioritized and ensuring that the specific needs are taken into account. Humanitarian organizations are also working with increasingly diverse partners in different contexts to put people's needs at the centre of coordinated responses.

Having communities at the centre of humanitarian action is critical for appropriate and timely aid and protection to reach the people in need, through plans such as Accountability to affected populations (AAP), the commitment of humanitarians to use their power responsibly. At the global level Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) partners are working to achieve more coherent and systematic approaches to AAP. Other positive outcomes have been the promotion of promoted stronger collective action, and adoption of the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments and Actions on *Community Engagement and Accountability* in 2019 by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Revision by UNICEF of its *Core Commitments for Children* to reinforce obligations to quality and accountability, and promotion by International Organization for Migration (IOM) of AAP principles across the organization.

Envisaged goals:

- Regular provision of information to affected communities, ensuring decisions are informed by the views of communities, and enabling communities to assess and comment on the performance of humanitarians
- raising awareness and ensuring that well-established community-based complaint mechanisms are in place to prevent and respond to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- significant shift towards common approaches to community engagement on a whole-of-response level, which should include:
  - o meaningful participation of affected communities and diverse groups of people in all stages of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), including in coordination, planning and monitoring.

### **Sexual exploitation and abuse**

The commitment of the 2018 IASC-endorsed Strategy on Protection from and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, is to creating a humanitarian environment free from sexual wrongdoing, where the people caught up in crises as well as humanitarian workers feel safe and respected.

The three overarching priorities, to:

- bolster prevention, expand safe spaces so all survivors can speak out
- promote the respectful use of authority
- support enhanced accountability, including investigations

Prevention of sexual abuse, exploitation Coordinators are responsible for leading inter-agency networks, ensuring safe and accessible reporting systems are in place, and establishing linkages with GBV and child protection referral services. Efforts are also supported at country-level by the IASC to coordinated implementation of the 2018 UN Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving implementing partners.



## **Financing**

Pursuit of alternative and innovative financing approaches such as scaling up anticipatory action to mitigate the most serious consequences of predictable crises.

It is acknowledged that current and future trends suggest that without political, economic and development action which addresses the root causes of humanitarian need, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, humanitarian organizations will continue to respond to escalating needs for decades to come. In light of this, the UN Secretary-General has rightly made it a priority for all humanitarian, development and peace organizations to collaborate more closely by working towards collective outcomes aimed at reducing risk, vulnerability and need, by way of adoption of such action steps as :

- promotion of gender equality and placement of women in positions of decision-making
- supporting children and youth to have access to quality education in crises and
- reinforcing local action wherever possible.

In regard addressing the data challenge, a systemic approach to filling the data gaps is possible. Common standards and better cooperation and coordination will go a long way in providing the evidence base required for policy work, development planning and humanitarian operations. Although appropriate tools for needs assessments, risk analyses, investment planning and progress monitoring already exist, which allow states to develop sustainable approaches to displacement, the priority should now be to provide national and local authorities with the financial and technical support they will need for their application.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The IOLDCs believes that effective and ultimately sustained inroads to better prevent, respond to and drive forward solutions to internal displacement, can be established on the following key fronts:

### **Partnerships:**

The value of effective and reliable local partners cannot be under-estimated. Such partners should be not be selected for convenience sake or on practical grounds, but on proven ability. Ideal sources for recruitment, especially at local level, are international professional associations/representative bodies, that often are, if not invariably, in official relations with UN bodies, but whose valuable resources, knowledge, etc are underused or even ignored. These associations / bodies have good and reliable established local member organisations/ partners that can be rallied and engaged as and when required.

Creation of the proposed partnerships should :

- recognise that 'ignorance' and exclusion of groups, may have led and can lead to adoption and implementation of contra-productive decisions and actions
- make each group aware of their respective roles and responsibilities





**Partnership tasks to involve :**

- Enhancing of the role of the groups in truly collaborative-style led planning and implementation of programs;
- Identification/sharing/review of current strengths and weaknesses in policies and practices;
- address current barriers;
- identification of increased opportunities for inter-partner collaboration;
- breaking inter-professional/organisation silo practices and encourage multidisciplinary approaches with the added value of team building management of activities;
- creating awareness of each professional group's role, responsibility, obligation and challenges;
- creating opportunity for cross-fertilization of knowledge, ideas and experiences;
- raising even greater awareness among the appropriate stakeholder groups at the global level;
- Involvement and leadership of displaced people themselves and their urban host communities.

**Data collation:**

This should be made a priority as collection, verification and sharing form the cornerstone and focus of most if not all international collaborative, between local and global partners, programmes. Granted that reliable data is difficult to access in the face of ever-increasing IDPs, its collection, verification and sharing should be fine-tuned in quality as it is critical to responsive effective humanitarian planning, protection services, and ultimately impacts legislations and policies that determine the fate of millions. In so doing, margins for error and ultimately impact on millions of vulnerable lives are kept at a minimum.

Such heightened support and involvement of the many tiers at local level should facilitate addressing by the international community of institutional barriers in order to effectively bring about coherence, and pursue with a renewed sense of urgency and purpose, joined-up funding and programming.

The anticipated resultant change would be the opening of the road to effective integrated approaches across sectors with increased investment in humanitarian, development and peace-building.

