



Submission to UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement Middle East Research Network - INDCaP Project

'Key Problems and Possible Solutions to Internal Displacement in the Middle East'

The Middle East research network of the global *Interdisciplinary Network on Displacement, Conflict and Protection* (INDCaP), makes the following submission in response to the Call for Inputs disseminated by the UN High-Level Panel (HLP) in March 2020.

The network

The INDCaP project promotes research on internal displacement in affected countries in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. It aims to: (i) draw together researchers in each region to develop a robust research community on internal displacement; (ii) build the capacity of such researchers in academia, NGOs and IDP communities; and (iii) promote cutting-edge research from different disciplines to shape context-sensitive solutions to displacement challenges.

The Middle East network is led by Dr. Hana Asfour (Research Fellow, Parallel Perspective Consulting, Jordan), with support from the IDP Research Programme at the Refugee Law Initiative, University of London, UK. Funding support for this pilot project is generously provided by the UK Research & Innovation Global Challenges Research Fund.¹

This submission reflects the input of the following Middle East network members: Dr. Sabria Al-Thawr (Sana'a University, Yemen); Dr. Nazar P. Shabila (Hawler Medical University, Iraq); Dr. Wais Aria (Tabish Organization, Afghanistan); Abdullah Alkafri (Ettijahat- Independent Culture, Lebanon); and Dr. Hana Asfour (Research Fellow, Parallel Perspective Consulting, Jordan).

Scope of the submission

This submission is addressed principally towards the following questions raised by the Call:

1. The key issues, problems or imperative which, as you see it, 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.
4. Focusing on solutions, your perspectives on what has led to many situations of internal displacement remaining stalled for many years and how effective solutions can be catalyzed, driven forward and supported.
6. Critical issues or questions as you see them in respect to data and evidence in the response to internal displacement including gaps, shortcomings and challenges in approaches or implementation and how these can be addressed.

Key challenges, possible solutions and key recommendations in the Middle East

¹ Project reference: AH/T005351/1 (INDCaP).



The following key challenges, possible solutions and recommendations are made.

Key challenges:

Existing regional and national policies fail to ensure the rights of IDPs in the region and instead often show poor political will and an attempt to escape responsibility to provide protection. Moreover, laws in the Middle East coupled with sociocultural norms founded on patriarchal notions place women and girls at greater risk to violence. Stigma and discrimination against minorities, including IDPs who are from LGBT communities further challenge their access to basic rights. Access to health rights, particularly for minority women, children and those with chronic diseases, is still a problem especially for those living outside camps within the host community.

As well as destroying key infrastructure, the protracted conflict in the Middle East has also affected access to basic services, such as health, education and economic opportunities. IDPs are more likely to have weak social, economic and health safety networks, which places them at greater risk to abuse and exploitation. IDP children are also vulnerable to exploitation by insurgent groups and are at greater risk of being forced into becoming child soldiers, drug smugglers, as well as being trafficked. Furthermore, increased pressure within families has led to negative coping strategies such as child labour, forced and child marriage and domestic violence. The general poor economic situation in the Middle East, coupled with the protracted conflict in the region, has created significant challenges for IDPs to achieve durable solutions and for sustainable returns to take place.

Return policies also fail to consider the dynamics of return processes, nor do they ensure sustainable reintegration opportunities, consequently preventing IDPs from achieving durable solutions and further fuelling conflict. The right to solutions for lost properties is another key problem. Moreover, the challenge of achieving equitable solutions to lost property is more difficult for IDP women, particularly in situations where they are heads of families and/or lack male guardians.

Lack of documentation challenges IDPs from accessing their basic rights. This is most prevalent among illiterate populations and particularly affects women and children. Lack of disaggregated data on IDPs challenges the development of policies that are informed by evidence-based data. Challenges in the collection of data on IDPs caused by access constraints also make it difficult to understand their situation and needs. More comprehensive monitoring and quality control measures are needed to prevent sexual harassment and corruption and ensure that humanitarian aid workers adhere to international ethical standards.

Possible Solutions:

Collaboration between IDPs, national governments, humanitarian organisations and academics is needed to find solutions for displaced people in the Middle East and better understand the diverse and context specific challenges hindering the return of IDPs. Gender age and disability (GAD) disaggregated data is necessary to inform policy making on IDPs in the Middle East. Approaching displacement and humanitarian support through an intersectional lens can ensure



inclusivity and that 'no one is left behind'. Moreover, the importance of prioritising assistance according to the needs of people rather than their status as IDPs or host communities is important to reach those who are most vulnerable.

Closely monitoring the returns of IDPs to better understand the conditions in which they are returning allows for support to be more responsive to their actual needs. Moreover, return policies and strategies need to include measures of restitution and compensation in order to avoid further conflict from taking place during IDP returns. These efforts also need to include psychosocial support, legal awareness on rights as well as conflict resolution and social cohesion activities as well as reconstruction or renovation of key infrastructure. The return process should also ensure the security of returnees and provide protection at the return areas.

Finally, encouraging durable solutions through the involvement of the development sector in the implementation of long-term gender sensitive recovery initiatives is key to reducing further conflict in the region and peacebuilding. De-escalating protracted urban conflict is key to ensuring long term stability and development in the Middle East.

Key Recommendations:

1. Promote spaces where IDP women and men, national governments, humanitarian organisations and academics can find solutions to internal displacement in the Middle East.
2. Build local capacities of researchers in the Middle East and promote evidence-based research on internal displacement that use gender responsive and intersectional.

7 May 2020