

Policy

PROTECTION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

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Endorsed by IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The IASC commits to promoting full respect for the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of internally displaced women, men, girls and boys in all phases of displacement, as reflected in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. Recognizing that primary responsibility rests with national authorities, IASC organizations will make all efforts to encourage national and local authorities and other duty bearers to meet their protection obligations towards internally displaced persons, support the development of national and local capacities to fulfil these responsibilities, and offer services in support of internally displaced persons (or, IDPs) where States may be unable or unwilling. IASC organizations will strive toward collective and complementary action that prevents and reduces risks related to internal displacement in line with the *IASC Protection Policy (2016)*, reinforced through strong advocacy with those responsible. Ensuring the full participation of IDPs in all their diversity, who are at the forefront of their own protection, the IASC will endeavor to support national and local actors, including through community-based approaches that strengthen the protection capacities of displacement-affected communities. Understanding that durable solutions are achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination, the IASC pledges to help lay the groundwork for prevention and solutions through rights-based and conflict sensitive approaches, in collaboration and complementarity with development, human rights, peace and other stakeholders, bound by the primacy of protection.

2. BACKGROUND

This Policy serves as an update to the 1999 *IASC Policy Paper on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons* (henceforth, "1999 IDP Protection Policy"), which was endorsed following the adoption of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* in 1998 (henceforth "Guiding Principles"). Since then, there have been significant developments within the IASC and UN relevant to addressing internal displacement:

- Humanitarian reform and the adoption of the Cluster Approach by the IASC, and successive efforts such as the Transformative Agenda, aimed at institutionalizing a more coordinated and predictable response to humanitarian emergencies.
- System-wide commitments to protection and human rights advancement, not least through the *Human Rights Up Front* initiative, the *IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action* (henceforth, "IASC Protection Policy"), the *Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights* and the *UN Agenda for Protection*.¹
- Multi-stakeholder efforts on internal displacement reinforced through, among others, successive efforts of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on IDPs, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, her establishment of the three-year *GP20 Plan of Action*, as well as the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel and *Action Agenda on Internal Displacement* (henceforth, "Action Agenda").²
- Redoubled efforts to support durable solutions as a critical need, reflected in the *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* (henceforth, "IASC Durable Solutions Framework"), the High-Level Panel, *Action Agenda* and consolidation of efforts achieved across UN action during the tenure of the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement.
- Critical IASC advancements on, among others, accountability to affected people, gender equality, centrality of protection, localization and the empowerment of women and girls, integrating gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian action, inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.³

Despite these advances, internal displacement remains one of the world's most significant challenges. The number of IDPs has risen to historic levels as conflicts proliferate around the world, while disasters and the climate threat intensify. Internal displacement is increasingly

complex, characterized by prolonged and often repeated displacement due to overlapping factors such as the protracted nature of conflicts, generalized violence, human rights violations and abuses and slow- and sudden-onset disasters exacerbated by climate change. Internal displacement is increasingly an urban phenomenon, and the overwhelming majority of IDPs are women and children.⁴

The experience of internal displacement involves heightened or particular protection risks prior to and during displacement, the consequences of which can continue even after IDPs have physically returned or decided to settle elsewhere.⁵ While fleeing in search of safety, IDPs might be exposed to the dangers of hostilities and heightened risk of different forms of violence, including from armed actors and gender-based violence, particularly affecting women and girls. They might be subjected to: family separation resulting in separated and unaccompanied children; land tenure insecurity and deprivation of land, housing or other property; inadequate standards of living; or displacement into inhospitable and hostile environments, where they suffer stigmas, marginalization, rejection or discrimination.⁶ The impact can be devastating, as loss of access to housing, lands, livelihoods, legal identity, family members, and social networks can negatively affect their ability to assert and enjoy a range of human rights, not least the right to participate in decisions that affect them. Depending on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and other diversity factors, compounded by hierarchy and power dynamics, IDPs frequently suffer from multiple and intersecting discrimination and human rights violations and abuses throughout displacement.⁷

An independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement commissioned by the IASC and concluded in 2024 found that the IASC system responds too slowly, is not effectively joined up, overlooks the specific priorities and needs of IDPs, in particular protection, and is often too focused on internal processes, neglecting to meaningfully engage IDPs in decision-making or help IDPs get their lives back on track. Current IASC guidance rarely addresses the specific protection risks and needs of IDPs.⁸ The review echoed a separate independent review of the implementation of the *IASC Protection Policy*, finding that protection, including for IDPs in particular, has yet to be meaningfully implemented across the system.⁹

Building on the *1999 IASC IDP Protection Policy* and informed by key findings and recommendations of the independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement and more broadly, the *Action Agenda*,¹⁰ this updated Policy sets out responsibilities of national authorities and humanitarian actors for ensuring such protection. Guided by the framework of rights reflected in the Guiding Principles and enabled by the *IASC Protection Policy* and *Framework for Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement*, it identifies priority areas for IASC members to ensure that humanitarian action prevents and reduces risks related to displacement and helps lay the groundwork for restoring enjoyment of their rights by IDPs so that durable solutions are achieved. In its supporting Annex, it also outlines the definitions and principles relevant to the protection of IDPs under applicable bodies of international law.

3. SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Primary responsibility for protecting IDPs and all persons in a country rests with the national authorities. National responsibility is a core concept of any response to internal displacement. It is a fundamental operating principle of the international community and is routinely emphasized by governments themselves, as a function of their sovereignty.¹¹ There are several benchmarks for governments to discharge an effective national response to internal displacement. These include:

- Preventing arbitrary displacement and minimizing its adverse effects
- Raising national awareness of internal displacement as a national priority
- Collecting disaggregated data and statistics on the number and condition of IDPs, while upholding the right to privacy and data protection
- Supporting training of line ministries, military, police, parliamentarians, humanitarian officials involved in humanitarian or emergency response and relief efforts, etc. on the rights of IDPs

- Creating a legal framework upholding the rights of IDPs in line with international standards
- Developing a national policy on internal displacement and ensuring adequate mainstreaming into existing national policies or action plans
- Designating an institutional focal point on IDPs, such as an existing agency, an inter-ministerial committee or task force, or a new IDP-focused body
- Engaging National Human Rights Institutions in addressing internal displacement
- Ensuring that IDPs participate meaningfully in decision-making and are regularly consulted
- Supporting durable solutions
- Allocating adequate resources to address internal displacement, and ensuring IDPs have unfettered access to services and assistance
- Cooperating with the international community when national capacity is insufficient.¹²

Particularly in fragile contexts, the very governments responsible for protecting and assisting their internally displaced populations, are often unable or unwilling to do so and, in some cases, may even be directly involved in arbitrary displacement or other violations of the rights of IDPs.¹³ Bearing in mind national responsibility, the role of international actors is to reinforce, not replace, national responsibility, involving a two-pronged approach to encourage States and other duty bearers to meet their obligations and responsibilities under international law while also supporting the development of national and local capacities to respect, protect and fulfill human rights.¹⁴ People affected by humanitarian crisis look to their national and local authorities, as well as the UN and the broader humanitarian community to support and strengthen their protection. Underlined by the UN Charter, which includes respect for human rights as one of its core purposes, and the integration of human rights as the foundation of many NGOs, the humanitarian community, therefore, has an essential role to engage with States and other duty bearers to protect the rights of people in need, including:

Engage duty bearers: Humanitarian actors have a fundamental responsibility to remind duty bearers, both State and non-State, of their obligations and encourage, assist and persuade them to fully comply with their obligations. They should avoid any action that could undermine or remove responsibility from the legally bound authorities.¹⁵ Such engagement works best when done collaboratively and through careful choice of methodology, with well-defined objectives for desired protection changes through proper identification of stakeholders.¹⁶

Support national/local structures and partners: Humanitarian actors can support national and local structures/partners to carry out their functions to reduce protection risks, including by: promoting institutional reform and the role of IDPs in all their diversity to shape government policies and programs; assisting authorities in identifying risks and potential mitigation and response measures, such as contingency plans for cyclical displacement; reinforcing community self-protection mechanisms, such as supporting social cohesion, informal early-warning and evacuation plans and other non-violent civilian approaches.

Directly providing services to affected populations: When competent authorities do not take or are unable to take appropriate measures (owing to lack of means, unwillingness or when no such authorities exist), humanitarian actors can and must help IDPs and others to realize their rights and access justice. This includes directly providing services and assistance to survivors to help them recover from violations, preventing imminent or stopping ongoing violations, or supporting access to justice and reparation for harm suffered.¹⁷

4. COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Protecting IDPs is a collective responsibility that extends across the humanitarian community. The **Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)**, in addition to their general role in coordinating humanitarian assistance, has a specific General Assembly-mandated “central role” in

coordinating the protection of and assistance for IDPs.¹⁸ This includes:

- Developing coherent policy to ensure that all humanitarian issues, including those that fall between gaps in existing mandates of agencies, are addressed.
- Advocating with principal organs, notably the Security Council, to draw the attention of the international community to the protection of IDPs.
- Ensuring that appropriate response mechanisms through the IASC are established on the ground.

The ERC, together with **IASC Principals**, has committed to systematically advocate for IDP issues, including by addressing protection and human rights challenges facing IDPs directly with governments and duty bearers. At country level, **Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs)** in their responsibility for leading and coordinating the response efforts of UN and relevant humanitarian actors, have a critical role. These responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the centrality of protection, the protection of IDPs and all individuals affected by the crisis under international law is central to humanitarian action that secures better protection outcomes and contributes to durable solutions for displaced populations.
- Advocating for governments on their responsibilities to protect the rights and respond to the needs of displaced citizens and residents, shaping the protection environment, including risk preparedness and risk reduction and ensuring IDPs of all ages, genders and diversities meaningfully participate in decisions affecting them and have access to public systems and services.
- Leading on humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy, including on protection risks that drive and perpetuate internal displacement.
- Coordinating collective efforts to protect humanitarian space, including relating to IDPs, as well as tailored approaches in government- and non-government-controlled areas.
- Providing neutral, impartial and independent protection and assistance to crisis-affected populations when governments are unable or unwilling to respond, shaped and guided by a central focus on human rights.
- Promoting understanding of the Guiding Principles within the UN and among its partners, as the foundation upon which protection and assistance activities are carried out, taking steps to lay the groundwork for solutions earlier in responses.¹⁹

Under the IASC Protection Policy, RC/HCs and **Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) member organizations, clusters** and all relevant humanitarian partners whether they have a formal protection mandate and have specialized protection expertise or not, are equally responsible for contributing to collective action on protection risks.²⁰ This includes:

- Working together to prevent, mitigate or end risks of violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation and violations of human rights in humanitarian settings, building on an existing protection cluster or other strategy, and based on continuous analysis of protection risks, as supported by the protection cluster and inter-cluster coordination mechanism.
- Coordinating with other actors, including human rights, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development institutions, to address protection risks outside the scope of humanitarian action.
- Meaningfully engaging with affected persons during all phases of a response in a manner that recognizes and is sensitive to age, gender and diversity.²¹
- Ensuring this approach is at the center of their collective humanitarian response.

The **international human rights bodies and mechanisms** under the umbrella of the UN include the Human Rights Council, its Special Procedures (independent experts and working groups) and Universal Periodic Review, and the Treaty Bodies.²² Their work, in which humanitarian actors and IDPs can engage with them and contribute to includes:

- Monitoring, analyzing and identifying human rights challenges for IDPs at country level, making recommendations to States and creating opportunities for reform.
- Receiving individual complaints and following up on them with governments.

The mandate of the **UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons** has a unique position and advocacy function concerning the protection and human rights of IDPs. Established as a Representative of the Secretary General in 1992 and having transitioned to an appointment of the Human Rights Council in 2010, this mandate is the single independent, global champion dedicated to the protection of IDPs worldwide. Humanitarian actors can engage with the mandate in its work to:

- Support States in meeting their primary responsibility for protection, assistance and solutions to IDPs through dialogue, advocacy, country visits, reports and other means.
- Strengthen the international response to internal displacement, including through participation in the IASC, mainstreaming of the Guiding Principles throughout the UN system and raising new or neglected aspects of the human rights of IDPs in reports to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly.

5. PRIORITY AREAS FOR IDP PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS

In order to further the IASC's commitment to the protection of IDPs, sustained and coordinated efforts are needed to encourage States and other duty bearers to meet their protection obligations and responsibilities, support national/local structures and partners in their functions to reduce protection risks, and, where competent authorities are unable or unwilling, to directly provide services and assistance that prevent or mitigate ongoing violations and help survivors recover and restore their enjoyment of rights. This engagement should be informed by the Guiding Principles and the views of IDPs themselves.

General principles (Principles 1-4): IDPs are entitled to enjoy in full equality the same rights and freedoms as other people in their country and shall not be discriminated against. Certain IDPs, especially unaccompanied children, expectant mothers, mothers with young children, female heads-of-household, persons with disabilities and older persons, and others in vulnerable situations might require specific attention.

Protection from arbitrary displacement (Principles 5–9): Articulates a right not to be arbitrarily displaced and the situations in which displacement is absolutely prohibited. States have a duty to avoid the displacement of populations, including in situations of armed conflict, unless absolutely necessary and to protect against the displacement of groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands. When displacement is unavoidable, certain guarantees must be respected for displacement to be lawful.

Protection during displacement (Principles 10–23): All persons, including IDPs, are entitled to the protection of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to life; to protection against acts of violence and torture, gender-based violence, landmines, and recruitment of children into armed forces or groups and their participation in hostilities; to adequate food, potable water, adequate housing, as well as land (including for agricultural livelihoods), appropriate clothing, medical services and sanitation; to freedom of movement, including in and out of IDP camps; to seek asylum in another country; to legal identity; to respect for family life and unity; to education and training, equally for women and girls; to employment and participation in economic activities; and to vote (for citizens) and participate in government and public affairs. Special efforts should be made to promote the participation of women in the planning and delivery of all response efforts.

Humanitarian assistance (Principles 24–27): When State authorities are unable or unwilling to provide assistance to IDPs, international organizations have the right to offer their services. Authorities shall grant rapid and unimpeded access to IDPs. Humanitarian assistance shall be provided consistent with the principles of humanity and impartiality and without discrimination addressing access impediments and constraints.

Return, resettlement and reintegration (Principles 28–30): IDPs should have access to a durable solution to displacement, which would include the rights to return to their place of origin, integrate locally at the displacement site, or resettle elsewhere in the country voluntarily, safely and in dignity; participate in the planning associated with their return or settlement and reintegration;

access to housing, land and properties including return of lost property or, where not possible, compensation; and equal access to public services.

The following are priority areas for humanitarian action to advance the protection of IDPs and help lay the groundwork for durable solutions.

5.1. Preventive Measures to Protect Individuals from Displacement

In internal displacement settings, preventive measures focus on addressing the conditions that lead to displacement and on protecting people from being forced to leave their homes, in line with international standards, while not hindering civilians from seeking safety. They also involve community-based protection initiatives to help people prepare for possible displacement to reduce the related risks. Prevention requires States, the international community and other actors, including civil society organizations, to look at risks and take early action – including through the implementation of the *IASC Protection Policy* (see 5.2) - instead of waiting for the emergence of a problem, including with regard to the following:

Addressing the drivers of displacement: Preventing displacement crises from emerging in the first place requires genuine political leadership and a renewed commitment to a rights-based order, including through the promotion of, and respect for, International Humanitarian Law (IHL). At the community level, drivers of displacement can also be addressed through mediation, social cohesion and other conflict mitigation efforts, measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk reduction, adequate safeguards for development projects, and implementing frameworks to ensure the equal enjoyment of all human rights.

Preparedness and mitigation: Before displacement occurs, States should conduct an analysis of the vulnerabilities related to displacement and a review of their legal, policy and institutional frameworks to identify potential gaps, and put in place appropriate laws, regulations, policies and procedures to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement, in line with international obligations and standards.²³ This includes policies to mitigate civilian harm and how to deal with displacement in the laws, manuals and training of armed forces. Once a crisis has emerged, immediate measures must be taken to prevent its escalation and mitigate its worst effects, in order to avoid affecting more people. This includes rapid mobilization at the early signs of conflict or disaster, as well as stopping or preventing more violations of rights. Humanitarian assistance and protection which addresses the immediate needs of IDPs can also help prevent secondary displacement by creating the conditions for people to stay in safety and dignity in an area pending a solution to their displacement, including by ensuring humanitarian access.

Sustainable solutions: Preventing the recurrence of displacement is also critical to making solutions sustainable, and is an important factor when, for example political interests prevail over IDP preferences and result in government-imposed returns, relocations or transfers of IDPs which do not meet human rights standards, including in terms of being safe, informed, voluntary and dignified.

Humanitarian actors can support preventive measures to protect individuals from displacement in their engagement and advocacy with States as well as humanitarian programming, in line with the *IASC Protection Policy* and related tools including the *Protection Benchmarks for HCTs*. Examples of such action include:

Support States to implement their obligations to prevent arbitrary displacement: for example, by providing technical assistance for drafting legislation to implement their international legal obligations.

Establish and strengthen early warning and early action mechanisms: together with advocacy with duty-bearers to ensure action on emerging crises. When there are early signs of conflict, renewed violence or threats to civilians, mobilize rapid action to support de-escalation, political negotiation and conflict resolution, and systematically address internal displacement as part of these efforts.

Enhance national capacities to prevent and respond: through training, awareness-raising and advocacy with national authorities and, where relevant, parties to conflicts to respect IHRL and, when applicable, IHL; strengthen the delivery of basic services, where inequities in service delivery may be root causes of conflict and displacement; review/amendment of domestic legislation, policies; ensure that peace and

transitional justice processes include IDPs and address root causes of displacement to prevent their recurrence.

Work with whole of society to address the root causes of displacement: and to promote peacebuilding, social cohesion and mediation that considers displacement risks (and includes the participation of IDPs) as well as appropriate disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, informed by displacement considerations and the perspectives of currently or potentially displacement-affected communities.

5.2. Reduce Risks Related to Displacement through the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action

Should preventive approaches fail to mitigate displacement, humanitarian actors should identify the key protection risks that are prevalent in displacement contexts and collectively seek to reduce these risks through a combination of programming and advocacy responses, as outlined in the IASC Protection Policy. In identifying these key risks related to displacement, reference should be made to the above-referenced Guiding Principles as the framework of rights and guarantees for IDPs.

Protection risks are multi-faceted, and there is a collective responsibility on all humanitarian actors to not only to recognize these protection risks and violations but also to respond within the scope of their respective institutional mandate and sectoral/cluster responsibilities. The following are priority considerations in internal displacement contexts:

Analyze protection risks: Using the Guiding Principles and the Protection Analytical Framework as reference, analyze the threats, situations of vulnerability, and capacities of IDPs and willingness/capacities of duty bearers relevant for a situation of internal displacement, e.g. risks of arbitrary displacement, discrimination against groups of IDPs, inadequate food, water, shelter/housing, health care, limitations on freedom of movement, or limitation of rights to participate or return, ability to integrate locally or resettle elsewhere; taking note of specific risks facing individuals and groups based on intersecting vulnerabilities.²⁴ Such analysis should be drawn from sector/cluster-specific analyses such as that of the protection cluster/sector, and analysis available from other sources, including outside the HCT.

Engage collectively to achieve meaningful protection outcomes: Prioritize protection and commit to collective protection outcomes, for example, developing a HCT Protection Strategy to address the most critical and urgent risks and violations for IDPs, beyond the scope of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan or Protection Cluster strategy, collectively engaging on sustainable return and reintegration for IDPs. This also involves mobilizing actors beyond the humanitarian response, including human rights, development or peace actors who, together with specialist protection actors, may have a critical role, including to address risks, rights violations and/or durable solutions.

Proactively protect through humanitarian presence: Proactive humanitarian presence can play multiple functions: deterrence by discouraging perpetrators from violence and violations of rights, encouragement by bolstering civil society's capacity to protect itself, and influence: by supporting constructive voices, including as active participants and leaders in coordination mechanisms, who can themselves contribute to deterring violence and encouraging civil society action.²⁵

Mainstream protection throughout the response: Ensure programs do not exacerbate existing or create new risks for affected people by mainstreaming protection into programs,²⁶ e.g. supporting IDPs to access and enjoy their rights, helping IDPs reside safely in camp and non-camp settings and improving their quality of life and dignity during displacement.

Integrate protection objectives into other sectoral projects and programs: Incorporate protection objectives into programs to reduce protection risks related to their mandate/sector/cluster, e.g. food security actors joining with protection actors providing civil documentation for IDPs, education actors working with school leaders to prevent armed forces from using schools to recruit, etc.

Evaluate commitments and monitor progress: Work collectively to assess progress in achieving protection outcomes and reducing risks and violations affecting IDPs, e.g. preparedness for displacement, monitoring progress towards solutions.

5.3. Advocate for the Protection of IDPs

Tackling the challenge of internal displacement means that humanitarian actors actively advocate with States, and non-State parties to conflicts where relevant, recalling their primary responsibility to assist and protect IDPs in accordance with IHRL and, in situations of armed conflict, IHL. While not as visible as material assistance, advocacy is, as set out in the IASC Protection Policy, a core responsibility of the HC and HCTs and should be systematically incorporated, with the support of the protection cluster where activated, into organizational and system-wide humanitarian action. In situations of internal displacement, it is critical that humanitarian actors strive to influence decision-makers and stakeholders to adopt practices and policies that ensure the protection of IDPs across the full spectrum of human rights, as well as a solutions-oriented approach from the earliest possible stage.²⁷ These advocacy objectives can include, for example:

- Meaningful IDP participation in public life and government decisions affecting them
- Strengthening legal systems or legal reform; ratification of the Kampala Convention and its incorporation into domestic law; inclusion of marginalized IDPs in existing laws and policies
- Protection from arbitrary displacement; respect for IHL and IHRL obligations
- Protection of children, women and girls, schools and hospitals
- Safe passage and overcoming impediments for those seeking to flee to reach safety, designated safe zones; dignified and accessible transportation of IDPs during movement
- Livelihood and self-reliance for IDPs, education for displaced children and youth, host community support
- Protection from forced evictions, civilian and humanitarian character of IDP camps, housing, land and property considerations
- Freedom of movement, access to legal identity for IDPs
- Access to IDPs in hard-to-reach areas
- Voluntary and safe nature of return programs
- Preservation of family unity during relocations and returns
- Restitution or compensation for damaged and/or destroyed housing, land and property
- Protection from other threats to human rights, limited enjoyment of other rights and basic services, discrimination on account of their displacement etc.²⁸

The nature of advocacy engagement can vary – from quiet diplomacy to public communication – and should be grounded in IHRL and IHL where applicable. Engagement must be evidence-based, focused on an outcome to be achieved and, crucially, informed by the priorities expressed by IDPs and other affected people. The following are key considerations:

Adopt a collective advocacy strategy or approach: Engagement, led by the HC with the support of the protection cluster/sector, can be undertaken as a group or by individual members of an HCT, and should be part of a collective advocacy strategy or approach. For example, the HC may lead, with support from protection-mandated organizations, a regular and sustained protection dialogue with authorities regarding the evacuation of civilian populations from the frontlines, or with armed actors aimed at dissuading them from a presence in or near IDP camps. Collaborative and joint advocacy can extend to human rights actors (if they are not already included through their membership of the HCT or protection cluster/sector), between local and global actors and with development and peace actors, including through information-sharing and analysis, and seeking complementary approaches to prevent and address protection risks.²⁹

Public/private and positive/adversarial approaches: Determined on a case-by-case basis, advocacy can be done through appropriate modes of action, such as discrete persuasion, mobilization of others and

denunciation. It can comprise letters to authorities, filing court cases, informal talks and discussions, public reports, press releases or public letters calling for needed changes to policy or practice. It can include positive engagements, such as off-the-record meetings with government stakeholders to help develop an IDP protection policy, or more adversarial engagements such as an off-the-record meeting with a parliamentary committee to discuss a law regulating military practice.³⁰ It could be a discussion with armed actors aimed at stopping the recruitment of child soldiers and/or release of any that have been recruited. The balance between quiet versus public interventions should be grounded in rigorous risk assessments and mitigation plans.

Leverage roles and capacities of different actors: Humanitarian actors can leverage multiple actors across development, peace and human rights to advocate directly for the rights of IDPs or to support in other ways. At the regional and global level, this includes engaging with key inter-governmental bodies such as the UN Security Council or Human Rights Council. At country level, national human rights institutions can also be engaged, not only in terms of monitoring IDP rights but also in advocating for and promoting them.

5.4. Enhance IDP Participation and Empowerment through Community-Based Approaches

Action to address internal displacement must recognize the rights and agency of displacement affected communities and ensure their active and informed participation in decision-making. Approaches should be guided by the knowledge of local communities and address the specific needs of people of different ages, genders, abilities and diversities, including promoting gender equality and the best interests of the child.³¹ It is critical that IDPs do not lose their ability to participate in governmental and public affairs, humanitarian programming or solutions planning because they have had to leave their homes. Humanitarian actors have a critical role, not only to listen and respond to IDPs but to address barriers to their participation and propose special measures to overcome them while in displacement, including with regard to responses by national and local authorities.³²

Governmental and public affairs: The objective of IDP participation extends from addressing immediate needs to systematically realizing the rights of IDPs as citizens and habitual residents to participate in government and public life, including elections, and to participate in the planning and management of solutions to their displacement.³³ States and other actors must implement measures to ensure IDPs can exercise their rights to participation, including voting and participating in general community, governmental and public affairs as citizens and residents of their country, as well as in decision-making processes related to displacement specifically.³⁴ Inclusion of IDPs in participatory governance alongside host communities can also be key for the development of national legal frameworks, peace processes and conflict resolution, as well as to ensure their access to services and urban development decisions central to local integration.

Humanitarian programming: Humanitarian assistance must be provided without discrimination and in a manner that takes into account an individual's special needs, vulnerabilities and intersecting identities. Special efforts should be taken to ensure the full participation of displaced women, youth and others in vulnerable situations including persons with disabilities, in matters such as camp creation and camp management, beneficiary identification, mine action, livelihoods, climate change adaptation efforts; etc.³⁵

Evacuation, relocation and planning for durable solutions: The Guiding Principles refer to the obligation of governments to consult with IDPs, including procedural safeguards in situations of evacuation or relocation, as well as durable solutions, where special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of IDPs in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration, as well as requirements to make an informed choice.³⁶

Resolving protracted displacement: When displacement becomes protracted, engagement with affected communities can diminish over time, or become dominated by a particular preference by the authorities, such as the return of IDPs to their places of origin or a disputed territory even when IDP preferences are otherwise or the situation on the ground does not allow. Sustained

engagement and consultation with IDP communities and the participation of IDPs in decision-making processes can be aimed at resolving entrenched displacement and finding viable durable solutions that conform to the preferences of IDPs while moving them out of a cycle of dependency.

Preventing displacement: Participatory mechanisms and processes can play an important role in prevention of displacement, disaster risk reduction and displacement mitigation planning and measures, particularly in countries that have experienced regular disaster-induced displacement or a history of conflict or violence-induced displacement.

Principles of participation and engagement are enshrined in IASC policy, including the *IASC Durable Solutions Framework* and the *IASC Framework on Collective Accountability to Affected People*, which provides key outcomes and actions involving not only consulting, but engaging with and empowering diverse community groups and local actors, reflecting their capacities, information needs and communication preferences, community participation and feedback systems, among others. The following are priority considerations in internal displacement settings:

Meaningful, inclusive and full engagement: Humanitarian actors must operate in full engagement with affected communities, recognizing their rights and dignity, as captured in the phrase “nothing about us, without us.” This involves engagement of communities in all their diversity, such partnering with IDP-led, women-led and youth-led organizations, and implementing specific measures for the inclusion of children, women, adolescent girls, LGBTIQ+ individuals, older persons, female headed households, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Engagement must begin as early as possible and be systematically integrated in all phases of the displacement cycle, prior to displacement where possible, during displacement and in the context of durable solutions and their monitoring. Efforts should not end until durable solutions are achieved.

Empowering community capacities to protect themselves: Experience has shown that for protection efforts to be most effective and sustainable, they must be designed to recognize, support and strengthen the protection capacities of individuals and communities themselves.³⁷ IDPs, like other civilians at risk, develop their own strategies to reduce exposure to, and mitigate the effects of, protection risks. In many cases, they also take proactive measures to reduce the threats in the first place by engaging in dialogue, negotiation, and mediation with parties to the conflict at the local level, as well as preparing for the risk of displacement. Community-based protection involves supporting such local mechanisms on the ground, which are based on local knowledge and build upon existing capacities and resources within the displaced community, as well as the host communities. Humanitarian actors play an important part in supporting these and other efforts by IDPs as the “experts” in their own situations, enabling them to keep safe where threats persist, cope with risks that cannot be avoided and claim their rights. Making populations at risk aware of their rights, through human rights training, awareness campaigns and advocacy with local leaders and communities, can empower them and serve as a preventive measure.

Information and communication: Information for IDPs, whether related to durable solutions, mine risk education, access to pensions, or that assistance is always free and that sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is prohibited, should be communicated in a manner and language format that is accessible and preferred by communities, taking into account age, including children, disability, gender, cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and educational background. No community is homogenous, not least displaced populations. The establishment and coordination of multiple communication channels and feedback mechanisms is critical to address the diverse and intersectional needs of IDPs as well as those more at risk or marginalized, including through the use of digital technologies.

Whole of society approaches and community-led engagement: A whole of society approach recognizes that IDPs have rights, agency and capacities, whereby communities can be engaged through consultative bodies such as IDP councils, and alongside local civil society actors, media, academia, etc.³⁸ Community-led engagement can be aimed at, for example, promoting social cohesion and mediating pro-actively when social tensions increase or abuse occurs, helping to reduce protection risks.

5.5. Lay Groundwork for Durable Solutions by Restoring and Ensuring the Rights of IDPs

Protection for IDPs ultimately entails ensuring a durable solution, which the *IASC Durable Solutions Framework* defines as being achieved “when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can fully enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement.” Protection is not a pre-condition but rather the underlying foundation, framing, objective and outcome of all solutions. Progress toward solutions is often a gradual, long-term process of reducing the harmful effects of displacement, and the *IASC Durable Solutions Framework* sets out the following criteria to determine to what extent a durable solution has been achieved:

Long term safety and security: including from those threats that caused the initial displacement or may cause renewed displacement; freedom from attacks, harassment, intimidation, persecution or punitive action upon return to their homes or settlement elsewhere; vulnerability to exploitation, intra-family violence or sexual violence; freedom of movement; disaster-risk reduction in disaster-prone areas; non-discriminatory access to national and local police, courts, etc.

Enjoyment of an adequate standard of living without discrimination: at a minimum, access to adequate food, potable water, adequate shelter and housing, essential medical services, sanitation and at least primary school education; tangible commitments of authorities and partners to address disparities between displacement-affected areas and other parts of the country.

Access to sustainable livelihoods and employment: employment and livelihoods that allow IDPs to fulfill at least their core socio-economic needs, on the same basis as residents; preferential measures to help IDPs adapt to new livelihoods, including for IDPs forcibly relocated by authorities from high-risk areas.

Access to housing, land and property: effective mechanisms for accessing housing, land and property, including the timely restitution of housing, land and property, regardless of whether they return or opt to integrate locally or settle elsewhere in the country; special attention to barriers that women and children may face in obtaining recognition of ownership or access to housing, land and property; revision of laws to ensure IDPs are not excluded from and do not lose property rights on the basis of an unfair application of legal provisions on abandoned property or adverse possession.

Access to legal identity without discrimination: necessary to access public services, reclaim property and possessions, vote or pursue other purposes linked to durable solutions; equal rights of women and men to obtain identity and civil documents and women to have documents issued in their own names; separated and unaccompanied children provided their own identity and civil documents; practical solutions in areas under de facto authorities.

Family reunification: Family reunification as quickly as possible and to seek a durable solution together, including where territorial control is divided by authorities; appropriate family reunification of unaccompanied or separated children following best interests of child; tracing as early as possible, identification of the fate of missing relatives.

Participation in public affairs without discrimination: owing to their displacement; often requiring special measures before return, local integration or settlement elsewhere; voter registration and education programs in IDP sites, special polling stations.

Access to effective remedies and justice: including, where appropriate, direct or indirect participation in peacebuilding processes, access to existing transitional justice mechanisms, reparations and information on the causes of violations.³⁹

In supporting durable solutions, humanitarian actors need not focus solely on physical locations associated with return, local integration or relocation/resettlement elsewhere. Rather, supporting durable solutions is a long-term process of restoring the enjoyment of human rights by IDPs which have been adversely affected by their being displaced, including their rights to security,

property, housing, education, adequate food, health and livelihoods, and which may also entail the right to reparation, justice, truth and closure for past injustices through transitional justice or other appropriate measures. The following are priority considerations for humanitarian actors to help lay the groundwork for solutions:

Solutions analysis: Undertake comprehensive analysis that considers threats, vulnerabilities, intentions, preferences, obstacles and capacities of IDPs on the pathway to solutions.⁴⁰ States bear the primary responsibility for supporting durable solutions for IDPs based on the recognition of their rights, including the right to an informed choice between the options of return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.⁴¹ It is critical that solutions analysis consider the willingness and capacities of government to support human rights-based approaches to durable solutions, including relevant national legislation, policy and programs.

Concerted and consolidated efforts: Solutions initiatives must not create new protection risks. As many post-conflict and protracted displacement contexts demonstrate, tensions often arise between the desire to achieve progress toward solutions and the potential to create new protection risks or leave segments of the population further behind, for example, promoting returns in areas that remain unsafe or ill equipped to welcome returned IDPs, as an alternative to repeated cycles of humanitarian assistance. Multi-stakeholder efforts require collaboration, trust, and a recognition of common objectives, not only between humanitarian actors but also human rights, development and peacebuilding actors – and above all, IDPs themselves, whose rights and agency must be at the center. Conflict-sensitivity, climate change adaptation/disaster-risk reduction, reconciliation and social cohesion, justice and dispute resolution, resilience to conflict, are all critical components of ensuring lasting, durable solutions.

Durable solutions not determined by location: IDPs may have continued needs even after deciding upon physical return, local integration or settlement elsewhere. Physical location of IDPs should therefore not result in automatic operational disengagement by humanitarian actors. For example, returned or resettled IDPs may still need to recover property and possessions which they left behind or were dispossessed of upon their displacement. For durable solutions to take hold, IDPs should have access to restitution or compensation, regardless of where they settle in the country and regardless of their tenure security for the related assets. Similarly, for IDPs who were victims of rights violations, failure to secure effective remedies may risk further displacement, impede reconciliation processes, create a prolonged sense of injustice or prejudice among IDPs, thereby undermining the achievement of durable solutions.⁴²

Develop the evidence-base to support durable solutions: Humanitarian actors, in collaboration with national and local authorities, as well as human rights, development, peace and other actors should pursue an evidence-based joint response to supporting durable solutions, always including IDP perspectives to inform any action that support them in achieving their preferred durable solution. Analyses and data collection should be guided by the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS), *IASC Durable Solutions Framework* and building on the solutions metric under the Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement Framework.⁴³ Data and evidence should respond to both humanitarian and development information needs and provide a basis to advocate for joint and collaborative responses to internal displacement that create conditions and pathways to solutions. The collection of age, sex and disability disaggregated data should be encouraged, as well as information about the specific legal and practical barriers and challenges faced by different displaced population groups and solutions proposed.

Ensure responsible exit and transition: In instances where international protection and humanitarian actors are obliged to withdraw from displacement situations due either to the de-escalation of crises or political factors, it is essential to ensure the continuity of protection after international actors exit. This can include measures to support community-based protection approaches, advocacy, joint planning and capacity-building with national authorities, and support to local humanitarian actors and civil society organizations to ensure that efforts to prevent displacement, protect and assist displaced persons, and enable durable solutions to their displacement endure after international actors have disengaged.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

In line with the *Action Agenda* which welcomed the IASC system to improve the assistance to and protection of IDPs and lay a better groundwork for solutions, this policy requires that:

- IASC entities and structures make all efforts to encourage national and local authorities to meet their protection obligations towards the internally displaced as rights holders, including the rights of IDPs to participate in public affairs and decisions affecting them, through engaging duty bearers, supporting national/local structures and partners, and through the direct provision of services, where States may be unable or unwilling.
- HCs and HCTs strive toward collective action that prevents and reduces risks related to internal displacement in line with the *IASC Protection Policy*, addressing key risks set out in the Guiding Principles related to non-discrimination, protection from displacement, access to safety, protection during displacement and durable solutions.
- IDPs' full and meaningful participation in the prioritization, design, planning, implementation and monitoring of actions and decisions directed towards them will be continually enhanced. This applies to their participation in governmental and public affairs, humanitarian programming, evacuation relocation and planning for durable solutions.
- Humanitarian responses prioritise community-based approaches that meaningfully and fully engage with at risk and/or displacement-affected communities in all their diversity and will aim to empower the protection capacities of at risk and/or displacement-affected communities through whole of society approaches.
- From the onset of an emergency, humanitarian actors lay the groundwork for durable solutions by restoring and ensuring IDPs' enjoyment of rights in line with the *IASC Durable Solutions Framework*, through rights-based and conflict sensitive approaches, in collaboration with human rights, development, peace and other stakeholders, bound by the primacy of protection.
- Preventive measures to protect individuals from displacement are supported throughout the displacement cycle, through addressing the drivers of displacement, protection from arbitrary displacement, mitigating measures during displacement and sustainable solutions.

It is necessary for all IASC entities and structures to contribute to strengthening the quality, inclusiveness and quality of assistance and protection for IDPs, who, after having already been torn from their homes, livelihoods and support networks, should not have to endure further fear for their safety and well-being. This is in line with cardinal importance of tackling internal displacement and other impacts of emergencies, for which the IASC was created, and builds upon the numerous advances by the IASC since that time. It is vital that humanitarian actors be at the forefront of renewed efforts to protect the human rights of all displaced populations.

ANNEX: DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES RELEVANT TO THE PROTECTION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Protection is defined by the IASC as all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law, namely international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.⁴⁴ National authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.⁴⁵ States have obligations to respect human rights by refraining from interfering with the enjoyment of human rights; protect such rights by protecting individuals and groups from human rights abuses by others, i.e. to prevent others from interfering with the enjoyment of human rights; and fulfil such rights by taking positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of human rights, for example, by enabling, providing and addressing barriers to allow people to fully enjoy their rights. In all situations, these obligations must be discharged without discrimination.⁴⁶ De facto authorities or non-state armed groups that exercise government- like functions and control over territory are increasingly expected to respect international human rights norms and standards when their conduct affects the rights of individuals under their control.⁴⁷

Protection aims for the rights of IDPs and others affected by humanitarian crises to be understood, respected, protected and fulfilled without discrimination, ensuring that duty bearers comply with their obligations and responsibilities under international law. It requires recognition of the specific protection risks faced by different population groups among IDPs owing to their gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and other aspects of diversity to enable targeted prevention, mitigation, and response efforts. Protection is not limited to survival and physical security but covers the full range of rights, including civil and political rights, such as the right to freedom of movement, the right to political participation, and economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to adequate housing, education, food and health.⁴⁸

The IASC Protection Policy (2016) emphasizes the importance of advancing protection as an **outcome**, which includes the **reduction of protection risks** as a result of, for example, changes in behavior, attitudes, policies, knowledge and practices on the part of relevant stakeholders.⁴⁹ Such protection risks can be understood as the combination of a threat (the source of violations), the vulnerability to that threat, and the relative capacity of a person or group to resist, recover or rebound from the effects of that threat. It also includes the capacity and willingness of duty bearers to address the risk. The egg protection framework provides a way to think about designing protection outcomes as **responsive**, i.e. aiming to prevent imminent or stop on-going violations, **remedial**, i.e. aiming to restore dignified living conditions, provide redress (e.g. access to justice, reparation) for past violations, or **environment-building**, i.e. aiming at creating the necessary legal and institutional framework, capacity and awareness that is necessary to promote respect for human rights and **prevent** future violations, including arbitrary displacement.⁵⁰

The UN **Agenda for Protection** requires that all parts of the UN system share a common vision of protection, including common understanding of protection risks and challenges in any context. The agenda is built around key principles: people at the center of UN action; all human rights together, universally enjoyed; protection being inherent to the UN's aims for sustainable peace and development; the best form of protection being prevention; protection as a continuing and collective responsibility of the UN system.

As defined in the Guiding Principles, **internally displaced persons** are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.⁵¹ Internal displacement occurs in situations of peace, conflict, violence and disasters, and IDPs' rights are often widely neglected, disregarded or violated.

There is no global treaty dedicated to IDPs, although **several bodies of international law** contain norms relevant to prevention, assistance, protection and durable solutions to internal displacement:

- International human rights law (IHRL) applies in all circumstances and without discrimination of any kind, including in times of peace and armed conflict, during disasters and pandemics.
- International humanitarian law (IHL) applies in all situations of armed conflict, no matter whether the armed conflict is international or non-international in nature.
- International criminal law governs individual criminal responsibility for crimes under international law, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression.
- International disaster law is an emerging area of law covering preparedness, response to, and recovery from, different hazards such as earthquakes, storms and industrial accidents.
- While international refugee law does not apply in situations of internal displacement, some of its provisions informed, by analogy, the development of the Guiding Principles, described below.

Drawing upon the relevant provisions of international law, the **Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement**, published in 1998, reflect in plain language the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of IDPs and how they apply in all phases of displacement, and conversely, the responsibilities of national authorities and non-state actors towards them. They address protection against displacement (Principles 5–9); protection during displacement (Principles 10–23); the framework for humanitarian assistance (Principles 24–27); and protection during return, local integration in the locations where persons have been displaced, and resettlement in another part of the country (Principles 28–30). The Guiding Principles remain an important framework for the protection of IDPs worldwide and continue to be recognized and applied by States, the UN, regional and non-governmental organizations.⁵² The African Union's Kampala Convention,⁵³ the first and only regional convention on internal displacement to date, includes provisions aligned with the Guiding Principles and is legally binding on States parties.

Under **IHRL**, IDPs enjoy the same human rights as all other people, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and inalienable. Internally displaced persons do not lose their rights because of their displacement. Human rights are inherent to all people, regardless of nationality, age, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status.⁵⁴ The prohibition of arbitrary displacement set out in the Guiding Principles is drawn from the provisions of IHRL on freedom of movement and choice of residence (which includes the right to remain in one's home), freedom from arbitrary interference with one's home and the right to adequate housing, which entails the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity. Displacement may also negatively impact a wide range of human rights. Victims of human rights violations and abuses have the right to effective remedy, including access to justice and reparation for the harm suffered.

Whenever displacement occurs in the context of armed conflict, including situations of occupation, IDPs are also protected by **IHL**, which contains provisions relevant to preventing arbitrary displacement and protecting IDPs as part of the civilian population. IHL expressly prohibits parties to an armed conflict from forcibly transferring or ordering the displacement of civilians, unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand.⁵⁵ IHL also aims to spare civilians from hostilities and their effects, including via the prohibitions on attacking civilians or civilian objects and on indiscriminate attacks; the prohibition on the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; the prohibition on reprisals against civilians and civilian property; the prohibition on collective punishment (which in some circumstances impact IDPs or may consist of destroying homes or other acts that drive displacement); and the obligation of parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control. IHL can provide important protections for

displaced populations, such as helping to maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of IDP sites and settlements ensuring they remain safe from military operations and hostilities, and facilitating humanitarian evacuations from conflict zones to secure environments.⁵⁶ IHL also prohibits adverse distinction, and provides that the specific protection, health and assistance needs of women must be respected. Children, persons with disabilities and older persons are specifically protected under IHL. IHRL and IHL are different in scope but offer complementary and mutually reinforcing protections to IDPs. The use of force in law enforcement, for example, is governed by international human rights law, including during an armed conflict.

When gross human rights violations or serious violations of international humanitarian law take place, States have the obligation to investigate and hold perpetrators to account, and to provide effective remedies to victims.⁵⁷ Mechanisms and procedures for individual and group complaints about human rights violations are available at the regional and international levels,⁵⁸ for example through, the Human Rights Council (HRC), the Special Procedures of the HRC, or the human rights Treaty Bodies.⁵⁹ Some National Human Rights Institutions also have mandates to receive complaints.⁶⁰ When field staff are faced with violations of IHRL and IHL including related aspects of the Guiding Principles the information should be communicated to those mandated to analyze and act on the situation including the RC/HC, the OHCHR, the ICRC or UN Agencies and entities with a specialized protection mandate. When sharing information, care must be taken to assess protection risks and 'do no harm'.

International and regional responses covering the assistance, protection and recovery needs of IDPs are further embodied in several frameworks. For example, the **Pinheiro Principles**, considered to global minimum standard on housing, land and property (HLP) restitution, offer guidance and recommendations on how best to address the complex legal and technical issues, as key to contributing to solutions and prevention, and for the realization of related human rights.⁶¹ Concretely, they assert both the specific rights to HLP restitution of displaced persons and as well as the measures States and international organizations should take towards populations seeking to reclaim their HLP. They recognize the equal rights of men and women, boys and girls, and call for positive measures to ensure gender equality in housing, land and property restitution.⁶²

¹ IASC, [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016; OHCHR, [A United Nations Agenda for Protection – Strengthening the ability of the United Nations System to protect people through their human rights](#), 2024.

² United Nations, [The Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: Follow-Up to the Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#), 2022.

³ IASC, [Collective Accountability to Affected People Framework](#), 2023; IASC, [Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action](#), 2024; IASC, [Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#), 2019; IASC, [Vision and Strategy: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment](#), 2022-2026.

⁴ United Nations, [Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future, Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#), 2021; Overseas Development Institute, [Independent Review of the IASC Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement](#), 2024.

⁵ United Nations, [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), 1998; OHCHR, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, A/73/173](#), July 2018.

⁶ UNHCR, [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.

⁷ United Nations, [Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Handbook for National Human Rights Institutions](#), 2022. For example, displacement disproportionately affects women through higher risks of gender-based violence, legal discrimination, economic marginalization or exclusion. Displaced children and youth can face heightened risks of abuse, neglect and violence, and have specific needs related to vaccinations, nutrition, education. IDPs with disabilities encounter physical, environmental and societal barriers to accessing specific displacement-related information, humanitarian assistance and services and the right to participate in society on an equal basis with others.

⁸ Overseas Development Institute, [Independent Review of the IASC Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement](#), 2024.

⁹ Overseas Development Institute, [Independent Review of the Implementation of the IASC Protection Policy](#), 2022.

¹⁰ The independent review, completed in March 2024, recommended an "updated" IASC policy on IDPs and the IASC Deputies Group subsequently agreed to revise the IASC's 1999 Policy Paper on the Protection of IDPs.

¹¹ UNHCR, [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.

¹² The Brookings Institution - University of Bern, [Addressing Internal Displacement: A Framework for National Responsibility](#), 2005.

¹³ Several other scenarios are possible. National authorities may be willing to respond to the needs of IDPs and possess the necessary resources, or they may be willing to respond but lack the required resources. In other cases, national

- authorities may be either passively unwilling to respond to the needs of the displaced, or even be obstructive of international efforts to address those needs.
- 14 UNHCR, [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.
 - 15 ICRC, [Professional Standards for Protection Work](#), Fourth Edition, 2024.
 - 16 IASC, [Policy Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016 (see Annex IV, Framework for Protection Activities).
 - 17 UNHCR, [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.
 - 18 UN General Assembly Resolutions [A/51/950](#); [A/56/164](#); [A/58/177](#); [A/60/168](#); [A/62/153](#); [A/63/286](#); [A/64/162](#); [A/70/165](#); [A/72/182](#); [A/74/160](#); [A/76/167](#).
 - 19 United Nations, [Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), 2022; IASC, [Terms of Reference for the Humanitarian Coordinator](#), 2024.
 - 20 IASC, [IASC Principals' Statement on the Centrality of Protection](#), 2013; IASC, [Policy Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016.
 - 21 The IASC's [Collective AAP Framework](#) as well as its [Operational Framework for Accountability to Affected Populations](#) and the Global Protection Cluster's [Checklist on incorporating Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#) provide useful guidance on how to involve affected people in assessment, analysis, design and planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
 - 22 Note also the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all human rights. OHCHR assists the work of the international human rights bodies and mechanisms. OHCHR is also a full member of the InterAgency Standing Committee.
 - 23 United Nations, [A/76/169: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2021.
 - 24 Global Protection Cluster. [Protection Analytical Framework: An Introduction and Annexes](#), 2021.
 - 25 Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, [Proactive Presence: Field Strategies for Civilian Protection](#), 2006; UNHCR, [Humanitarian Protection in Armed Conflict](#), 2021.
 - 26 Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit](#), 2017,
 - 27 UNHCR, [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.
 - 28 See for example, Advocacy Messages, Key Protection Messages for IDPs in Mozambique, 2021.
 - 29 Overseas Development Institute, [Independent Review of the Implementation of the IASC Protection Policy](#), 2022.
 - 30 CIVIC, [Toolkit: Advancing the Protection of Civilians in Conflict](#), 2022.
 - 31 United Nations, [Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), 2022.
 - 32 United Nations, [A/73/173: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2018.
 - 33 Overseas Development Institute, [Independent Review of the IASC Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement](#), 2024.
 - 34 United Nations, [Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future. Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#), 2021.
 - 35 The Brookings Institution - University of Bern, [Moving Beyond Rhetoric: Consultation and Participation with Populations Displaced by Conflict or Natural Disasters](#), 2008.
 - 36 The Brookings Institution - University of Bern, [Moving Beyond Rhetoric: Consultation and Participation with Populations Displaced by Conflict or Natural Disasters](#), 2008.
 - 37 UNHCR, [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.
 - 38 United Nations, [Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future. Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#), 2021.
 - 39 IASC, [Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.
 - 40 JIPS, [Working Towards Durable Solutions: What We Learned at the Recent GP20 Steering Group Meeting](#), 2019.
 - 41 United Nations, [A/68/225: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2013.
 - 42 IASC, [Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.
 - 43 JIPS, [Durable Solutions Analysis Guide: A Tool to Measure Progress towards Durable Solutions for IDPs](#), 2018; EGRIS, [International Recommendations on IDP Statistics \(IRIS\)](#), 2020; Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement (DSID) Taskforce, [Proposal for Improving Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement](#), 2023.
 - 44 IASC, [Policy Paper on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 1999. Definition originally adopted by a 1999 Workshop of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Protection.
 - 45 United Nations, [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), Principle 3(1), 1998.
 - 46 IASC, [Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters](#), 2011.
 - 47 IASC, [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), page 1, 2016.
 - 48 UNHCR, [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#), 2010.
 - 49 IASC, [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), page 15, 2016.
 - 50 IASC, [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016 (see Annex IV, Framework for Protection Activities).
 - 51 United Nations, [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), 1998.
 - 52 United Nations, [2005 World Summit Outcome, UNGA Res A/RES/60/1 \(2005\)](#) para 132 and subsequent UNGA resolutions entitled "Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons" as well as Human Rights Council resolutions entitled "Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons."
 - 53 African Union, [Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa \(Kampala Convention\)](#), adopted 23 October 2009 and entered into force 6 December 2012.
 - 54 IASC, [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016, page 18; United Nations, [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), 1989; United Nations, [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), 1979.

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- ⁵⁵ GCIV [art 49](#) specifies that where civilians must be evacuated for their own security or reasons of imperative military necessity, the parties have an obligation to ensure that “Persons thus evacuated shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased.” See also [ICRC Database on Customary International Humanitarian Law](#), Rules 129 to 133.
- ⁵⁶ UNHCR, [Humanitarian Protection in Armed Conflict](#), 2021; ICRC, [Aide Memoire: Operational Guidance on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Sites and Settlements](#), 2017.
- ⁵⁷ OHCHR, [Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law](#), 2005.
- ⁵⁸ OHCHR, [Complaints about human rights violations](#).
- ⁵⁹ OHCHR, [Reporting violations](#).
- ⁶⁰ GANHRI, [Responsibilities and functions of NHRIs: Complaint handling](#).
- ⁶¹ United Nations, [Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons \(the Pinheiro Principles\)](#), UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, 2005.
- ⁶² ICRC, [Professional Standards for Protection Work](#), Fourth Edition, 2024.