

CONCLUSION

Toward a global framework for national change

Despite progress in implementing the Guiding Principles over the last 20 years, internal displacement is still not a key component of national and global development agendas. Efforts to address the phenomenon are not yet seen as investments in risk governance and sustainable development.

To reduce displacement risk, protect and assist those already displaced and help them to achieve durable solutions, countries have to be in the driving seat. Investments in equitable development, peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction will have to go hand in hand with coordinated humanitarian action. A first step would

be to develop a country-led framework for reducing internal displacement to facilitate planning, target setting and monitoring.

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AS OPPORTUNITY

Some progress has been made in mainstreaming internal displacement into domestic policy. Greater leadership is particularly visible when it comes to displacement associated with disasters, which more countries than ever

Classrooms in Damascus and surrounding towns reopened in 2017 for summer school, giving internally displaced children in Syria the opportunity to study again, after being forced to leave their home towns. Photo: NRC/Karl Schembri, August 2017



recognise as a development concern. They also increasingly embrace the positive impacts of a strengthened global disaster risk reduction agenda.

These developments should be supported, continued and reinforced, but there are two caveats: first, policy instruments do not necessarily lead to successful implementation; and second, the pace of implementation may be outstripped by the generation of displacement risk, which then materialises. So where will the political will and solutions come from to reverse this trend? What incentives do states have to reduce displacement risk?

This report has started to present the case for investment by arguing that human and state security, economic growth and social stability are impossible to achieve in countries that have large numbers of people living in protracted displacement, or face recurrent new displacement and high levels of risk. Displacement is both a cause and consequence of insecurity and low or unequal economic and social development.

More solid evidence is required, but examples from 2017 show that high vulnerability combined with poor physical and economic security can quickly translate into crises for individuals, communities and states. Unsustainable development practices increase the risks that trigger displacement, even in high-income countries with significant governance capacity.

Our hope and intention is that by assessing the true costs of internal displacement on local and national economies, countries and those interested in reducing the phenomenon will be encouraged to focus their attention on the trade-offs inherent in the setting of national priorities and development and humanitarian budgeting.

As this report clearly demonstrates, more comprehensive monitoring of progress in reducing internal displacement is vital at both the national and international level. The shortage of data on existing situations, which we regularly highlight, and the absence of sound risk models for all types of displacement, are obstacles that need to be addressed. That said, much relevant data produced by governments for other purposes is available, which means we are still able to assess some of the drivers and impacts of displacement, albeit sometimes indirectly and imperfectly.

More data will not necessarily translate into better outcomes, however, and reporting only on the scale of internal displacement and the urgency of protection concerns will not paint a truly global picture. It is even less likely to shift political attention and programme approaches. High quality and interoperable data across the entire displacement continuum is needed, and that data must be used to inform smart and effective responses.

The suggested guiding questions and country dashboard for monitoring put forward in Part 2 of this report helps to address these issues by encouraging countries to understand internal displacement in relation to political, economic and security priorities. It also encourages more comprehensive reporting on progress against the SDGs, commitments under the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement, and on the future global compacts on refugees and migration.

Comprehensive and concrete investments are needed to reduce existing displacement, account for the risk of new displacement, and integrate displacement risk into development planning. Below we set out clear recommendations to do so at the national, regional and global level (see table 3, p.84). A range of development and humanitarian actors, including national line ministries, will have to cooperate and coordinate to put them into practice in order to achieve collective outcomes.³⁰²

TABLE 3: Reducing displacement risk through national and local action for collective outcomes

Account for internal displacement risk	Integrate displacement risk into existing development instruments and mechanisms
1 Invest in administrative and statistical capacities for improved data collection, analysis and progress monitoring for internal displacement in line with requirements for planning and reporting against the SDGs	
2 Establish or improve displacement risk assessment and early warning capacities at the local and national level	
Build displacement risk governance capacity	
3 Show political will by locating responsibility for a national accounting system for IDPs and for the monitoring of internal displacement at the highest level, backed by the necessary political authority and resources	
4 Share power by decentralising responsibility for the prevention of displacement and IDPs' protection to the local level, backed by the necessary devolution of authority and dedicated human and financial resources	
5 Promote accountability by encouraging national audit offices and similar control mechanisms to undertake periodic reviews of progress in reducing displacement within national development plans and strategies	
	6 Ensure that internal displacement is considered in national development plans, poverty reduction strategies and sector investment plans
	7 Develop social and economic investment plans for municipalities and regions with high numbers of IDPs, resource constraints and low infrastructure and social service capacities
	8 Invest in ecosystem services and natural resource management in line with frameworks such as the Convention on Biodiversity, the Framework Convention on Desertification and Deforestation and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction
	9 Accelerate action on peacebuilding and conflict prevention at all levels in line with regional frameworks and peace processes
	10 Shift from humanitarian assistance and protection to greater investment in preparedness and prevention, including comprehensive social protection and welfare programmes that target particularly vulnerable groups



TOWARD A COLLECTIVE APPROACH

As we launch this report, countries are negotiating the global compacts on refugees and migration. They are also reporting on progress against SDGs that are central to the issue of human mobility in the 21st century, particularly goal 11 on safe and resilient cities. The link between displacement on the one hand, and economic growth, social progress and human and national security on the other, should be apparent in these policy processes, but it is not explicitly made.

Country-led strategies are needed that harness the benefits of mobility while managing the risk of displacement through prevention, peace and resilience building and disaster risk reduction. This would put countries in the driving seat, but the international community – primarily UN agencies and large humanitarian and development organisations – should also move internal displacement up their agendas and provide more coordinated support.

The UN secretary general, António Guterres, has highlighted the urgent need for a more effective and holistic approach to understanding and dealing with crises through proactive investments and prevention, noting that “while the causes of crises are deeply interlinked, the UN’s response remains fragmented”.³⁰³ The international community’s approach to internal displacement is a prime example of this, in which fragmented data, analysis and knowledge impedes coordinated responses.

By taking on internal displacement as an integral part of his crisis prevention, peacebuilding and sustainable development agenda,³⁰⁴ the UN Secretary-General would be at the forefront of a much-needed paradigm shift from reaction to prospective action, and from fragmented response to prevention and sustained development investment. By working with member states and the UN system toward common goals and national targets for reducing internal displacement, including by the establishment of a dedicated function and office at the highest level, he might convert the promise to leave no one behind into reality.

We need to raise our collective ambitions. We need to accept that the people who tried to scale the Ceuta border fence were doing so because of our failure to ensure the physical safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable, our failure to understand internal displacement as the starting point of broader crises. But if we change the narrative, and listen to those who are suffering as well as those that are responsible and capable, we can bridge the gap between development priorities and humanitarian concerns, and truly turn the tide on internal displacement.