

Forced displacement and IDPs

Millions of people are forced to flee their place of residence each year and millions more live in situations of repeated, protracted or high risk of future displacement.

Internally Displaced Persons

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are people who have fled their home communities due to persecution, conflict, disaster or other extreme circumstances, but have not crossed an international border. Often, they are fleeing their own government which is supposed to protect them. This makes IDP protection particularly challenging.

UNHCR, IOM and other agencies assist IDPs in specific situations but there is no single or specifically mandated UN agency or universal legal treaty covering their rights.

Drivers of displacement

- **Conflict and violence** – For two decades, refugee numbers have been constant compared with **escalating numbers of IDPs**. Once displaced by conflict, people struggle to return to normalcy and are likely to be displaced again either within or across borders.
- **Natural disasters and climate change** – when combined with poverty, urban migration and poor land use -- increase the risk of displacement.
- **Some Development projects** - force people from their homes and/or land. They may involve forced eviction and leave people more marginalised and vulnerable than before.

Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

These are important global principles covering 30 standards for the protection needed for IDPs. They detail the relevant rights and guarantees in relation to:

- General rights, principles and obligations
- Protection from forced and frequent displacement
- Physical security, dignity and freedom of movement
- Family and community protection
- Economic, social and cultural rights, including access to employment and security of assets
- Humanitarian protection and assistance without discrimination
- Protection during return, resettlement and reintegration

The **2012 Kampala Convention** provides legal protection for IDPs in Africa affirming national governments' responsibility for IDPs and host communities.

Community based protection

- Involves displaced communities in the design of protection and assistance programmes and on their return or resettlement.
- Encourages the maintenance or restoration of communal links and promotes integration of IDPs in host communities to enhance their security.
- Prioritises reunification of families, providing support for unaccompanied children, and enabling IDPs to remain with clan, tribe or village members.
- Facilitates conflict resolution and reconciliation across different groups to help protect IDPs and establishes the relations and conditions conducive for safe return and reintegration, or resettlement and integration of IDPs.

Considerations for displacement in urban areas

- Displacement within, to and between cities contributes to urbanisation and the growth of informal settlements
- Poor or unplanned construction increases the risk of further displacement
- Urban development can also force people out of previously affordable areas
- Cities may struggle to absorb and meet the service needs for large numbers of IDPs
- Urban areas generally offer better access to goods, housing, services and income opportunities that reduce IDP vulnerability
- Large influxes of IDPs can create mistrust and resentment through competition for jobs and resources
- Increases in urban population density can increase the risk of conflict, criminal activity and violence
- If well integrated, IDPs can create demand and bring skills, assets and other resources

Additional resources on All In Diary website

Handbook for the Protection of IDPs, © GPC, 2010
Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, © IASC, 1999

Web links for further information

IDMC: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>
OHCHR: <http://www.ohchr.org/IDPersons>