



**STATEMENT FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES (ICVA)
AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT
(25 FEBRUARY 2020)**

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to bring inputs from ICVA members to this inaugural meeting of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and we second the interventions from other NGO networks present in the room.

ICVA (the [International Council of Voluntary Agencies](#)) is a global network of non-governmental organizations. Our mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

There are currently at least 41.3 million people displaced¹ within their own countries by conflict, violence, and disasters including the effects of climate change and this staggering figure is probably an underestimation. We often talk of them as 'IDPs', but it is important to remember that behind this acronym are people, human beings who often live in dreadful conditions, facing challenges such as food insecurity, lack of accessible, inclusive and dignified livelihood opportunities, lack of protection as well as inadequate and inappropriate access to critical services such as health, education, water and sanitation. Women and girls are particularly at risk, often facing various forms of abuse and exploitation, including sexual and gender based violence. Although finding solutions is often cited as an urgent matter, growing numbers remain in displacement for years or even decades as the root causes of displacement become increasingly complex and protracted.

Despite the scope and urgency, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have been left out of key international processes in recent years, leading many NGOs to worry that IDPs will be left behind and not get the much needed attention they deserve.

ICVA members therefore welcome the launch of this High-Level Panel as an important step towards preventing displacement, improving protection of Internally Displaced Persons and finding solutions, through coherent, multi-stakeholder engagement and commitment. We herewith commit to bring our contributions and experience to bear over the coming 12 months to garner global attention and support for displaced people.

We appreciate the objective of developing concrete recommendations to improve the approach of governments, the humanitarian system, and development institutions but also to attempt to engage other partners, such as the private sector, academia, and of course persons of concern, particularly those with typically less voice such as women and people living with disabilities. Given that over 40 per cent of all people internally displaced by conflict and violence are under the age of 18, any attempt at preventing or responding to internal displacement should include a strong focus on children and youth.

The High-Level Panel is a unique opportunity to identify new solutions and creative ways to prevent and address internal displacement, which should also avoid reinventing the wheel. The work of the Panel must take the existing knowledge-base built over the past decades as its point of departure, including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Kampala Convention, and the collaborative efforts of States, UN agencies and NGOs to prevent, protect and find solutions to internal displacement under the multi-year GP20 Plan of Action. The Panel also has a unique opportunity in engaging States to tackle and unpack many of the long-standing challenges related to States' responsibilities around protecting and assisting Internally Displaced Persons.

¹ Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019, IDMC: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>



As you can imagine, we have high hopes for the Panel and would like to see an ambitious work agenda. The highest level of ambition is to bring tangible and durable improvements in the lives of Internally Displaced Persons and host communities, including ensuring their protection and enabling them to fully exercise their rights as citizens. This starts with preventing internal displacement from occurring in the first place. We urge the High-Level Panel to also look into how organized crime and transnational networks, as well as adverse effects of climate change affect internal displacement. We also wish to see an outcome on prevention of displacement, given the growing challenges to appropriately resource the response to displaced populations' needs. The Panel's work should also bring improvements in the mechanisms to respond to future internal displacement. For a global NGO network such as ICVA, this particularly means ensuring NGOs can operate in such contexts, within effective coordination and funding mechanisms.

On this basis, we make the following 8 recommendations to feed into the Panel's work plan and methodology:

1. Put People, Rights and Protection at the Center:

Recognizing the wider scope of the Panel, aiming at system-wide change and commitments, we urge you to nevertheless look beyond and take a people-centered and rights-based approach, to foster concrete impacts on the lives of affected people. This is fundamental at a time when human rights are increasingly coming under attack, as recently highlighted by the UN Secretary General.² Its work should particularly be steered by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and relevant international legal frameworks and promote their further implementation, compliance and domestication.

Fundamentally, ensuring that the rights of each internally displaced person are respected is an essential part of ensuring that their needs are met during and after their displacement. An age, gender, and diversity (AGD) approach is vital to ensure comprehensive protection and non-discrimination in prevention and response efforts, underpinned by a strong child-rights based approach. An AGD approach helps to understand needs, capacities, and who can – or cannot – access rights, services, and decision-making processes in displacement situations. An AGD approach enables to adapt responses so that they are fully inclusive and ensure the realization of the rights of all affected persons. For example, millions of children and youth live in internal displacement due to conflict, violence and disasters – this is a highly demographic issue that requires a comprehensive and context specific response that must include access to quality education as a means to normalize their present situation and build hope and skills for their future. It is highly important to be inclusive of the needs of all internally displaced, paying particular attention not to exclude groups that are often marginalized, and face stigma and discrimination. We cannot overemphasize the specific needs and risks facing women and girls during displacement. We therefore urge the Panel to be guided by the inter-agency policy position on Women's And Girls' Rights And Agency In Humanitarian Action: A Life-Saving Priority.³

National governments and local authorities bear the primary responsibility for internally displaced persons' protection and welfare. Promoting the development of national legislations, policies and frameworks protecting the rights of IDPs and allowing civil society to contribute should also be a strong objective of the High-Level Panel. This would help create or improve context specific 'enabling environments' for efficient and effective IDP responses. This focus should also include building a broader awareness and understanding across public institutions – such as National Human Rights Institutions – of responsibilities towards protecting the rights of Internally Displaced Persons.

² See: Secretary-General's remarks to the UN Human Rights Council: "The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights", 24 February 2020: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-02-24/secretary-generals-remarks-the-un-human-rights-council-%E2%80%9Cthe-highest-aspiration-call-action-for-human-rights-delivered-scroll-down-for-all-english>

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/women-s-and-girls-rights-and-agency-humanitarian-action-life-saving-priority>

2. Participation of Internally Displaced Persons:

Such enabling environments should ensure appropriate gender- and age-responsive mechanisms are in place for meaningful participation of internally displaced persons and host communities in processes affecting them, including development processes. Strengthening participation and ensuring their leading role can contribute towards rebuilding self-reliance, resilience and durable solutions, while allowing for accountability to IDPs. The role of language in ensuring participation and upholding the rights of internally displaced people is very often overlooked, yet attention to language and communication is central to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement⁴. Civil society is very well placed to assist the High-Level Panel in consulting with IDPs and host communities, and thus ensuring we all maintain our active commitment to Accountability to Affected Populations. Building on our first recommendation, these consultations should include those typically excluded from decision making and/or humanitarian aid coordination mechanisms, such as women, youth and persons with disabilities. In particular, all children should be given a chance to express themselves and should be associated to the identification of their needs and to the development of a plan to address these needs. The Panel can draw on the work of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs⁵, as well as through the GP20 Plan of Action.

3. Development and Solutions focus:

We support the clear emphasis on durable solutions when those are aligned with people's rights and aspirations. It is time to realize that internal displacement is an issue that requires considering long-term solutions early on, starting with prevention of displacement and working on root causes. Therefore, in parallel to providing humanitarian assistance, it is important to work on supporting their resilience, by promoting inclusion in their host communities, access to employment opportunities, access to education for children, especially in cases of prolonged displacement. In line with Nexus thinking, designing durable solutions requires that humanitarian and development actors systematically analyze and plan together internal displacement responses, and identify mechanisms to promote integrated/area-based approaches from the early stages of displacement. In this domain, we suggest that the Panel's work builds upon past initiatives on Solutions, including the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons⁶, the Durable Solutions Indicator Library, and the Durable Solutions Analysis Guide⁷.

Internally Displaced Persons, including the most vulnerable, are often very resourceful and have clear visions and ideas about solutions. As recommended above, they should be fully included as target populations and partners in policies, programs and national action plans to implement the sustainable development goals, particularly the goal to leave no one behind. Besides, the Panel should emphasize that prevention and resolution of internal displacement represent investments in development and conflict prevention. The longer people are kept in limbo without clear prospects to rebuild their future, the higher the cost to address a range of complex socio-economic issues, such as entire "lost generations" resulting from protracted displacement. It is also time to take a concrete step forward in achieving gender equality and we believe the High-Level Panel is well equipped to spearhead this effort. As one of the sustainable development goals and a key commitment from the World Humanitarian Summit, achieving gender equality for all, including young women and girls, must be one of the key pillars of long-term solutions for Internally Displaced Persons. It is important that solutions have a strong focus on children and far greater priority needs

⁴ See e.g.: "Language and the Guiding Principles", *Forced Migration Review*, October 2018:

<https://www.fmreview.org/GuidingPrinciples20/kemp>

⁵ See in particular the 2017 Report to the GA on Participation of IDPs: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IDPersons/A-72-202.pdf> and the 2019 Report to the GA on Protection of internally displaced children: <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/261>

⁶ See: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons>

⁷ See: <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/>

to be given to promote access to education, healthcare and protection for internally displaced children.

4. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities:

As mentioned in our opening, it is fundamental to consider the operational contexts in situations of internal displacement. In this connection, we call on the High-Level Panel to develop recommendations related to the ‘eco-system’ or architecture of responses in internal displacement situations. This is a complex issue but it is critical to understand that the structures in place (or not), how well they function, and how much clarity there is around stakeholders’ respective roles and responsibilities have major impacts on the protection of and solutions for Internally Displaced Persons. There have been many ups and downs in the ecosystem since the Collaborative Approach in 1999, the Humanitarian Response Review in 2004 and the Humanitarian Reform in 2005 and we encourage the Panel to bring forward what has worked well and also learn from what has worked less well. We also suggest looking at both Global Compacts relevance for IDP response. Furthermore, we hope the Panel can make recommendations towards holding to account and supporting Member States as the primary responsible actors for the protection of IDPs and finding solutions to their displacement.

5. Increase Resources and Effectiveness:

We hope that increased global attention among Member States and the UN system will translate into much needed additional, un-earmarked predictable and multi-year funding, both in humanitarian and development spheres, based on enhanced responsibility-sharing. We recommend looking back at previous recommendations in this domain, including from the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing⁸ as well as looking into new recommendations on innovative financing schemes.

We also stress the importance of looking for more efficient and cost-effective ways of working and financing as we believe there may be “low hanging fruits” in terms of finding more efficient and effective ways to respond.

6. Improve Data and Evidence on Internal Displacement:

Quality data and evidence helps inform more inclusive and efficient programming, prioritize resource allocation, and supports policymaking and advocacy. Better understanding of internal displacement assists in forecasting and contextualizing trends. It informs better preventative measures, responses and contingency as well as long-term planning. Robust monitoring systems shed light on the costs and impacts of displacement on individuals, communities and States, which helps promote the accountability of governments and other actors to vulnerable people. Much progress remains to be done though, particularly in certain domains such as disaster situations. We therefore call on the High-Level Panel to prioritize recommendations to improve the collection and analysis of age, gender and diversity disaggregated data and evidence on internal displacement. Here as well, NGOs are at the forefront of innovative approaches and can bring strong contributions to the work of the Panel. You can build on existing initiatives and tools, such as the work of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre⁹, the Joint IDP Profiling Service¹⁰, the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative¹¹, two Data Centers in the Hague and Copenhagen¹², and

⁸ See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/high-level-panel-humanitarian-financing-report-secretary-general-too-important-fail>

⁹ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.jips.org/>

¹¹ <http://pim.guide/>

¹² The Center for Humanitarian Data: <https://centre.humdata.org/> and the UNHCR-World Bank Group Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/forceddisplacement/brief/unhcr-world-bank-group-joint-data-center-on-forced-displacement-fact-sheet>

the statistical recommendations for IDPs¹³. We also recommend a focus on the role of National Statistics Offices where possible.

7. Impacts of Climate Change on Internal Displacement:

Internal displacement associated with climate change is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that cannot be ignored anymore, as highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Climate change increases displaced people vulnerabilities, affects the resilience and safety of people. It is increasingly clear that internally displaced persons not only suffer the consequences of violence and war, but are disproportionately impacted by climate change and disasters. Unsustainable economic growth and development practices accelerate climate change and environmental degradation, which in turn may reduce crop yields and access to natural resources, and eventually force people from their land and communities. We are therefore pleased to read that the Panel will look at the root causes of displacement and particularly at climate induced displacement. How climate change can worsen the situation of already displaced populations, cause and/or exacerbate conflict are also fundamental topics to address. We suggest that the Panel seeks advice from multi-disciplinary teams with climate, displacement and gender expertise to propose solutions to better prevent climate induced displacements or at a minimum to reduce its impacts. Consulting affected populations is crucial in those contexts as well. Concrete recommendations pertaining to reducing the environmental impact of humanitarian and development actors would also be welcome.

8. Disaster Displacement:

On average, 25 million people flee sudden onset disasters each year¹⁴. Internal displacement is one of the most common and immediate impacts of disasters, and in some cases, it takes place even before a hazard strikes. The majority are displaced due to extreme weather, like floods and storms. We expect more extreme weather in the future, as global temperatures increase, and this will lead to a rise in the number of people displaced by disasters.

Given the scale of disaster displacement and its vast humanitarian and development consequences, it is crucial that it is included in the work plan of the High-Level Panel. Disaster displacement was considered in the Guiding Principles already in 1998. However, Governments, the United Nations as well as other humanitarian and development actors only recently started systematically addressing this issue.

Effective disaster risk reduction must be implemented to prevent individuals and communities from becoming displaced. Recognizing potential risks, mitigating them where possible, and ensuring that countries and communities are robustly prepared helps to avoid displacement and respond resiliently where displacement does occur. Furthermore, measures to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction enable displaced people to rebuild their lives.

Conclusion:

We welcome the Panel’s determination to undertake the broadest consultations possible, including with local actors in line with localization efforts and commitments. Given the tight timeframe, meaningful consultations will have to be framed around a clear methodology and arrangements. We would like to suggest that the Panel includes in its workplan a schedule of regular meetings with NGOs and civil society, including indigenous groups, at the global level, as well as during regional and country visits. Other means of providing inputs could include sharing position papers, organizing

¹³ See, e.g.: International Recommendations on IDP Statistics Becoming Real: Update on EGRIS, JIPS, 12 December 2019: <https://www.jips.org/news/international-recommendations-on-idp-statistics-becoming-real-update-on-egris/>

¹⁴ Disaster Displacement: How to Reduce Risk, Address Impacts and Strengthen Resilience: A companion for implementing the Sendai Framework Target, 2019: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/58821_wiadisasterdisplacement190511webeng.pdf



webinars on specific topics or contexts, or providing feedback on different proposals being considered by the Panel.

NGOs offer a range of experiences of working and advocating with – and for – Internally Displaced Persons and have long been supporters of improving the lives of IDPs. ICVA members stand ready to work closely with the Panel, its Secretariat and the Expert Advisory Group to share ideas, experiences, as well as contacts with internally displaced people, local organizations and indigenous groups in different contexts. We will also highlight related events and opportunities ICVA members will organize at national, regional and global levels so as to create synergies.

As NGOs, we are keen to discuss and strategize with the Panel and the Secretariat, Member States and other actors to promote concrete schemes and measures to ensure protection and support IDPs and their host communities in the search for durable, efficient and inclusive solutions. Those solutions should reflect the views and aspirations of Internally Displaced Persons and give due consideration to the unique characteristics of each displacement situation.

The 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants noted the “need for reflection on effective strategies to ensure adequate protection and assistance for internally displaced persons”¹⁵. We have high hopes that, come February next year, this eminent Panel will deliver exactly that. We also anticipate that your report to the UN Secretary General will ensure that the focus and profile of internal displacement remains high following the end of this Panel’s mandate. Your report should set in motion a number of measures, short, medium and longer-term, to ensure the right programmatic, legislative, and policy orientations are taken to ensure States have additional tools and support to prevent, address and respond to situations of internal displacement. We propose that the Panel’s report captures such measures as part of a concrete follow-up process or a plan of action for the years to come.

¹⁵ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 September 2016: New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, A/RES/71/1, para. 20.