

UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement

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Key points

- UNHCR must be proactive in preparing for and acting to address emergencies that result in situations of internal displacement
- Our engagement is grounded in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement and 2022-2026 UNHCR Strategic Directions
- Protection outcomes are central to UNHCR's work with IDPs and the core focus for pathways to solutions from the start of displacement, fostering local and national ownership, grassroots community engagement, and close collaboration with development, human rights, and peace actors
- Protection and solutions are the key drivers shaping UNHCR's work in internal displacement, as well as our distinct areas of expertise and comparative advantage

1. Overview

UNHCR has been involved with internally displaced persons (IDPs) since 1971 when the UN General Assembly initially requested its expertise and assistance, reaffirmed over time through resolutions to protect and assist IDPs. These recognize UNHCR's proficiency in addressing forced displacement and its ability to adapt to changing crises. They also emphasize the importance of addressing root causes and the plight of those displaced within their own countries as also an important element in resolving refugee situations.

UNHCR's IDP policy encompasses its involvement in internal displacement situations, from preparation to providing protection and supporting solutions within collective responses alongside states and affected populations. It is applicable to all UNHCR personnel across field,

country, regional, and headquarters levels, with mandatory compliance.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

The IDP policy reaffirms UNHCR's commitment to engaging decisively and predictably in situations of internal displacement. This commitment is an integral element of our operations worldwide and our protection leadership role in humanitarian crises. The policy requires country, regional and global operations to mobilize and deploy their resources and capacities to support UNHCR's longstanding pledge to work in partnership with others to strengthen protection and secure solutions for internally displaced people (IDPs). The policy empowers and requires Representatives to be proactive in preparing for and taking action to address emergencies that result in significant internal displacement. They act as part of a humanitarian response under the UN country leadership, based on a sound protection and context analysis. Representatives will be supported to: implement inter-agency commitments; place protection at the centre of humanitarian action; and design, implement and sustain a meaningful, solutions-oriented operational response to internal displacement that is backed up by global advocacy and resource mobilization.

3. Main guidance

The IDP policy provides guidance in situations where UNHCR engages with IDPs and wider displacement-affected communities. It covers: State responsibility; respect for human rights and international law; putting protection and solutions at the centre of humanitarian action; upholding humanitarian principles; safeguards and accountability; and contributing to a multi-stakeholder whole-of-society approach through partnerships.

The policy equally provides guidance on operationalizing UNHCR's commitments at country and global level, with respect to leadership, advocacy and coordination, and operations. The guidance covers the different phases of an IDP emergency, from preparedness, through delivery of a protection and solutions response, to responsible disengagement. To make the implementation of UNHCR's engagement effective, the guidance also addresses: integrated programming and area-based approaches; data and information management; identity management; resource mobilization and funding; and workforce management.

How to implement this at field level?

The IDP policy is accompanied by a Guidance Package for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement. The guidance package includes a checklist for UNHCR Representatives and discusses inter-agency coordination arrangements; programming; resource mobilization; communications; and considerations for responsible transitioning. It is complemented by an [Implementation Planning Tool for IDP Contexts \(Building Blocks\)](#) (accessible to UNHCR staff only) to support country operations during implementation planning as a practical tool in refining their plans and allocating resources for IDPs.

Post emergency phase

UNHCR, plays an important role as the protection lead organization in HCTs and should continue to advocate for common approaches and goals for IDPs. UNHCR should continue to invest and further enhance its engagement in longer term planning for internally displaced persons by building linkages between emergency responses and transition plans and platforms.

Checklist

- See the Checklist for UNHCR Representatives in the Guidance Package for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement for:
 - 1.1. Preparing for emergencies
 - 1.2. Delivering a protection and solutions response
 - 1.3. Disengaging responsibly

Annexes

[UNHCR Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement 2019-2021](#)

4. Learning and field practices

Accessible to UNHCR staff only

[IDP Law and Policy - Workday](#)

5. Links

[Guidance package for UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement,... Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, 2019 Accessible to UNHCR staff only: Risk management tool: Internal Displacement Sit... Accessible to UNHCR staff only: Implementation Planning Tool for IDP Contexts \(...\)](#)

6. Main contacts

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