
Internal displacement is not a footnote

Global Compact on Refugees, Written contribution for second formal consultations, 13 March 2018

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are the “invisible majority” of the world’s displaced population. We estimate that 40.3 million people were internally displaced by conflict and violence as of the end of 2016, nearly double the number of refugees.

While the majority of IDPs don’t end up crossing international borders, many will nevertheless become tomorrow’s refugees and vulnerable migrants. Refugee crises are, in large part, a symptom of the failure to protect and assist people displaced within their own country. This reinforces the need for conflict prevention and early warning, increased development investment in countries of origin and a more nuanced understanding of why people cross borders. Only by understanding and addressing causes and drivers of internal displacement will we be able to tackle the global refugee crisis head-on.

In parallel, while more than 550,000 refugees returned to their countries of origin in 2016, many face the risk of de facto internal displacement if they are unable to go back to their place of origin or sustainably integrate elsewhere. This demands a more holistic approach to durable solutions that integrates planning and policy for IDPs with that for returning refugees.

In the face of these challenges, IDMC welcomes the specific mention of the relationship between return and internal displacement in paragraph 78, the call to ensure that IDPs also benefit from livelihood programming and economic opportunities, and the recommendation for countries of origin to incorporate the Guiding Principles into their national policies in footnote 71. However, addressing and reducing internal displacement should be a bedrock of the compact, not just a footnote. As such, we **recommend moving footnote 71 into the body of the text, and strengthening the wording of the recommendation.**

Second, given the likelihood of further displacement (both internal and cross-border) in the case of premature and/or involuntary or coerced returns, **we call for the importance of voluntariness and respect for the core principle of non-refoulement to be laid out explicitly in paragraph 75 of the draft.** Moreover, noting that efforts to address and mitigate internal displacement will have an impact on refugee flows in the region, **we recommend that the need for preventing and monitoring internal displacement be included in paragraph 44 on preparedness.**

Finally, while IDMC commends the call for “reliable, comparable and timely data” in paragraph 39, **we suggest that a recommendation be added with regards to the collection of interoperable statistics covering the entire displacement continuum, including internal displacement before flight abroad and after return to a country of origin.** Further, agencies and authorities on the ground need to monitor returnees’ trajectories over time, gathering data on their progress toward re-establishing their lives against the benchmarks set out in commonly agreed standards such as the IASC framework on durable solutions.

In the upcoming consultations, we urge governments, world leaders, and members of the public to take up the UN secretary general’s call to protect and assist IDPs and to resolve their plight before they flee across borders. Only by leaving no one behind can the global refugee crisis be truly resolved.

Thank you.



Alexandra Bilak
Director
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre