

Research Report | XXV Annual Session

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# General Assembly 3 – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural

## Supporting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)



**MODEL UNITED NATIONS**  
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

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<b>Forum:</b>	General Assembly 3 – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural
<b>Issue:</b>	Supporting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
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## Introduction

The ongoing conflicts in many countries around the world have made drastic social impacts. Amongst the many effects of civil unrest lies the issue of supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are those that flee their homes but remain within the country's boundaries. Refugees and IDPs are two distinct terms that are often seen as the same. The ICRC outlines the difference between the two as, "refugees are people who have crossed an international frontier and are at risk or have been victims of persecution in their country of origin. Internally displaced persons (IDPs), on the other hand, have not crossed an international frontier, but have, for whatever reason, also fled their homes". Although solutions to question at hand have already been put into place, such as the setting up of camps, to support IDPs through mainly humanitarian aid, there is still a lack of focus on this issue. Governments and related organizations tend to focus more on providing solutions for refugees, compared to IDPs. Thusly, there is an essential need for combined efforts to tackle the root cause of this issue as well as further develop methods to support the IDPs who struggle to rebuild their lives. Nevertheless, we must remember that there are factors causing the counting of IDPs to be unreliable at times. Yet solutions must be found so that governments can implement measures to deal with as many IDPs as possible.

The recent outbreaks of wars have led to the high prominence of IDPs around the world. For example, the Arab Spring in 2010 which caused a great increase in number of IDPs. Additionally, the recent Syrian Civil War that began in 2011 has drawn the attention of several international organizations that are supporting IDPs in Syria. Unfortunately, these examples are merely two out of many that are happening currently.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Cluster Approach

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The Cluster Approach is the grouping of UN agencies and international organizations that tackle the same issue through working together. Different key sectors that need to be addressed in order to solve the issue are allocated to individual agencies in order to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian aid supplied to IDPs.

### **Internally Displaced Person (IDP)**

"Internally displaced people are people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." (Internally displaced person)

### **Mandate**

A mandate can be given to organizations and/or agencies as an order to complete a certain task or work towards a certain objective.

### **Protracted displacement**

"Situations characterized by long periods of exile and separation from home. When people remain displaced for a long period, their needs may no longer be urgent but can be just as acute. As the years pass, the challenges to be faced change as people grow up or grow old, living in a state of extended yet temporary limbo away from home. For them, as for those assisting or hosting them, there is also an inevitable tension between planning sensibly for the long term and yet not creating a long-term situation that precludes their return home." (Forced Migration Review)

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

Humanitarian assistance is the act of organizations, such as Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), providing people with protection and aid after man-made crises and natural disasters. (Defining humanitarian assistance)

## **General Overview**

### **Statistics**

The reliability of statistics on IDPs can often be questioned. Due to the fact that populations are not constant, the statistics are usually treated as estimates. IDPs tend to



move around actively which makes it hard to assess the numbers, especially those who flee to urban areas. Speaking of which, 50% of IDPs are estimated to be in urban areas that cater to protracted displacement. However, these people are often neglected by international aid organizations and governments as their focus usually lies with displacement responses in rural areas. (Internally Displaced Person)

On a global scale, it is estimated that there are 24.5 million IDPs. Additionally, between 70 and 80% of this population is made up of women and children. The highest figures have been recorded in Syria, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Sudan and Azerbaijan. A similarity between these nations is that they have experienced political instability of some sort which has led to civil wars, causing populations of over 1 million people to be displaced. (Internally Displaced People)

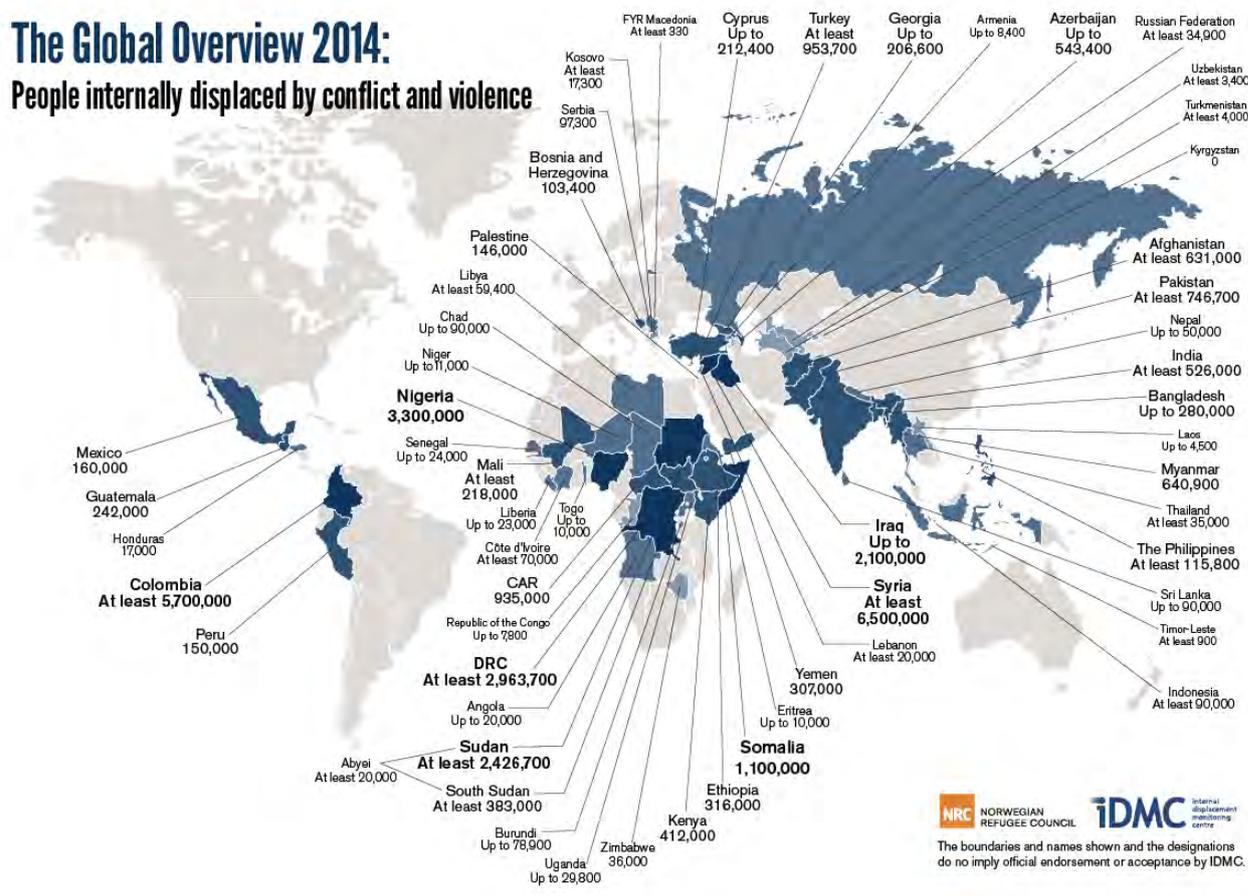


Figure 1 Global Map of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) due to conflict in 2014

The Global Overview 2014: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence. Digital image. International Displacement Monitoring Center. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Blog/Related-Media/201405-map-global-overview-en-01.png>>.

## Causes of IDPs



When dealing with complex issues, we must face a wide range of causes that are challenges seeming impossible to tackle. Natural disasters, for example, are not events that we can simply find solutions for. Another cause of internal displacement is development-induced displacement and resettlement which refers to the forced movement of communities out of their homes due to economic development. On the other hand, the causes that have led to armed conflicts within nations are perhaps the most prominent cause of the issue. Notably in African areas of high figures of IDPs, poverty, climate change, lack of resources and mostly political instability are triggers for people fleeing their homes. (Root Causes and Prevention of Internal Displacement)

### Effects

Although camps are set up for IDPs, there are many IDPs who move to urban areas to seek shelter. Their arrival causes for several issues to arise which leads to the need of support for such people who face challenges on a daily basis. Besides the loss of homes, lands, family and livelihoods, IDPs are inevitably dependent on others for food, water and shelter. Furthermore, difficult access to health care, education and employment pose as major issues. (Protecting Internally Displaced Persons)

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a humanitarian institution that aims to protect IDPs. Due to its strong compliance with the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which is a law that prohibits the attacking on and destroying of civilian property, the ICRC helps IDPs throughout all phases of displacement. Thusly, the ICRC works on providing temporary settlements such as camps or host communities. Additionally, the organization aims to provide longer-term shelters in camps or urban environments. (Internally Displaced Persons: The Mandate and Role of the International Committee of the Red Cross)

### Iraq

The ongoing conflicts in Iraq have caused large numbers of IDPs to grow over the years. Consequently, the Iraqi government has been showing desire to tackle the issue through setting up the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) in 2003 with an objective of assisting IDPs. However, they have failed to meet the expectations of dealing with the IDPs due to lack of expertise and resources. Yet, a partnership with the UNHCR has



caused for the establishment of centers, mainly in Baghdad, where centers have been set up to provide assistance to IDPs. Hence, Iraq is currently making efforts to solve the issue at hand. However, due to the overwhelming number of IDPs and lack of resources to assist IDPs, there is still a lot that needs to be done in order to make successful changes.

### Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka received international criticism over the past years as result of their IDP camps where around 300,000 people were detained. The conditions in the camps outlined the need for sanitation as health problems were growing. Although Sri Lanka has a negative reputation on this issue, due to the way IDPs were treated in the past, the Sri Lankan government is attempting to deal with the issue through setting forth the construction of camps as well as carrying out plans to deal with IDPs. (Sri Lankan IDP camps)

### Syria

While Syria is facing many problems concerning IDPs, they are being assisted with humanitarian aid from organizations such as the UNHCR. The greatest problem they are facing is the lack of funds in order to be able to assist all IDPs with humanitarian aid. The Syrian Civil War is the main cause of the unrest in the country that has led to this issue. The ongoing violence is causing the number of IDPs to grow constantly. Unfortunately, Syria has become one of the most severe cases of IDPs in the world with statistics stating that nearly 9,500 Syrians are being displaced daily. Yet the Syrian government fails to recognize the severity of the issue at hand. The government has no concrete political solution, and is relying on international organizations. There is not enough attention being paid to Syrian IDPs on behalf of the government as they merely see IDPs as temporarily displaced. (Montgomery, Katarina)

### Zimbabwe

IDPs in Zimbabwe are currently inhabiting land without supporting documentation. Zimbabwe is struggling to deal with the issue as many IDPs are left with few income opportunities and poor access to social services. Civil unrest and political instability, notably the elections of 2008, are the root causes of the estimated 1 million IDPs. However, the Zimbabwean government is working on legal frameworks to deal with the issue at hand. Zimbabwe is also one of the first African nations to show effects to tackling the issue of IDPs through signing the Kampala Convention. (The Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons)



## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
14 December, 1950	General Assembly mandates the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to lead worldwide protection of refugees. However, over the years UNHCR begins to set up rehabilitation programs for IDPs. The UNHCR is recognized for its extensive work on providing humanitarian aid to IDPs in desperate need. Especially in areas of ongoing conflict that have the greatest number of IDPs in the world, such as Syria.
1998	Establishment of Internal Displacement Monitoring Center which has caused for clarity on the issue in terms of figures of IDPs in parts of the world in order to be able to understand the severity of the issue and allowing organizations to make realistic goals.
December 2005	The Cluster Approach is put into place whereby UN Agencies united to support IDPs. This approach acts as a next step into supporting IDPs more effectively and using resources in the most efficient way possible. It also serves as a solution for relevant organizations to carry out their work in the fastest way possible as they are able to focus on their area of expertise.
2008	Elections in Zimbabwe lead to unrest causing the displacement of around 38,000 people. In response, the Zimbabwean government has been working on the creation of legal frameworks to reduce the IDP population.
2009	Camps for IDPs are set up in Sri Lanka. However, this is the start of growing international criticism towards the Sri Lankan government due to the conditions of the camps and the restrictions enforced on the IDPs.
October 2009	Zimbabwe is one of the first African nations showing commitment



to solving the issue of IDPs through signing the Kampala Convention.

- 12 January 2010      The Haiti Earthquake causes the displacement of approximately 1.5 million people who are sheltered in over 575 camps.
- 17 December, 2010      The beginning of the Arab Spring. Demonstrations and protests occur starting in Tunisia. The revolution leads to a large number of IDPs within affected nations in the Arab world.
- 2011      The civil unrest in Syria begins. Over 7,000,000 IDPs are estimated to have been caused by the Syrian Civil War.
- 6 December 2012      The Kampala Convention enters into force as it is ratified by 15 states.

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created by United Nations with a mandate to protect and support refugees. Although the focus of the agency had solely been on refugees, relief and rehabilitation programs were set up in 1972 for people who were internally displaced. Furthermore, in 2005 the UNHCR provided aid for 5.6 million IDPs. Out of the estimated 26.4 million IDPs globally in 2011, 15.5 million were supported by the agency. In the recent years, an agreement was formed between the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies whereby the UNHCR was granted the position of being responsible for leading emergency shelters and managing camps for IDPs. They developed a 'cluster approach' whereby the UNHCR oversees needs of IDPs and coordinates actions carried out by humanitarian agencies.

The collaborative approach is shared among a wide range of UN agencies including UNHCR, World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and several international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). However, there were many concerns as to whether this was the right approach to deal with IDPs. Concerns were based on the fact that agencies were free to pick which situation they wanted to become involved in which meant that some areas of importance were left neglected. To solve this problem, an attempt was made to solve this issue through allocating different UN agencies involved to sectors with specific responsibilities which is called the cluster approach. At this



point, the UNHCR was responsible of taking the leading role of management of emergency shelters. This approach is extremely beneficial for the issue at hand as supporting IDPs requires extensive humanitarian aid. IDPs have many needs that need to be met seeing as all their livelihoods have been taken away from them. Therefore, the cluster approach prioritizes the most important areas that IDPs need support in. Currently, the clusters are concentrated on nine areas which include health, nutrition, water and sanitation, protection, shelter and early recovery. (The Cluster Approach)

- Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, 3 June 2015 (A/RES/69/286)
- Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons, 18 December 2013 (A/RES/68/180)
- The Kampala Convention Treaty

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) acts as a global monitor on information regarding internal displacement. Through analyzing statistics as evidence of the severity of this issue, the IDMC uses their findings to influence governments, UN agencies, and NGOs through requiring change in policies in order for action to take place. Through its effective work on supporting IDPs, they have been included in several UN General Assembly resolutions. Furthermore, they analyze legal frameworks for protecting people at risk of displacement as well as provide governments with independent information. The IDMC is able to do so because it works with local (e.g. local governments) and global partners (e.g. United Nations). (About IDMC) Although the IDMC does not physically provide IDPs with aid, this attempt to solving the issue at hand is of paramount importance as it triggers other organizations that have the authority to make changes to do so. Similarly to the UNHCR, IDMC uses combined efforts to achieve their goals. Given the fact that the issue at hand is ongoing and widely spread across the world, collaborating with governments and NGOs is an effective method to solving the issue which is partly what has made their work effective.

On another note, a common attempt to supporting IDPs is through setting up camps which are coordinated by several UN agencies. A recent camp that drew attention of the international community was the Sri Lankan IDP camps in 2009. The events that occurred serve as a valuable lesson for both governments and organizations of how to deal with IDPs



during conflict. The Sri Lankan military created a safe zone for people who made it out of the war zones. They were taken to another district where they were housed in camps. However, lack of sanitation led to diseases spreading in the camps. (Protracted Displacement) Aside from health issues, there were minimal resources in terms of water and food which led to protests within the camps. The attempts to support IDPs in Sri Lanka was not handled well, but clearly illustrated the importance of the need of essential resources. On the other hand, a positive element was the construction of supermarkets which made the settlements more permanent. (Sri Lankan IDP camps)

## Possible Solutions

The issue of supporting IDPs is in need of more solutions than what is currently being implemented as there is a lack of recognition for the importance of the question at hand. While IDPs are currently receiving humanitarian assistance by a various organizations and agencies such as the ICRC and UNHRC, the issue of IDPs is merely a sub-sector of their mandates which means that there is a need for fuller attention devoted to this issue on its own. This can be achieved through the creation of separate bodies or bodies within existing UN agencies that have mandates specifically dedicated to the issue of IDPs. On the other hand, seeing as there is a large number of IDPs globally as well as a wide range of tasks for UN agencies to fulfil in order to fully support IDPs, perhaps the tasks could be simplified through the creation of tasks split between continents so that agencies can focus more on specific regions rather than dealing with IDPs on a global scale. Alternatively, the creation of sub-clusters which would be allocated to more agencies and organizations would simplify the tasks as it would be more specific and therefore more efficient.

One of the main ways to find solutions to this problem is through enhancing measures to support IDPs throughout all stages of displacement i.e. local integration into new settlements (commonly temporary), permanent settlement, and if applicable, eventual return to their origin. IDPs can be supported at permanent settlements where they rebuild their lives through ensuring safety and security, access to livelihoods and employment, access to civil status and documentation, access to basic shelter food water education sanitation and medical services. Through effective solutions that permit each of the listed needs of IDPs, they can learn to be independent without the need for humanitarian assistance.

However, in situations where camps set up by UN agencies and NGOs (as part of the cluster approach) are the only option for IDPs, solutions can be found for dealing with large



number of IDPs and improving facilities at such camps; for example, implementing measures to ensure sanitation and perhaps access to education. Additionally, camps can be made more permanent through construction of supermarkets as was done in Sri Lanka. Camps can also be improved in order to support IDPs through more effective planning methods and regulations when making camps. For example, regulations can be made on how many people can settle in a given area of a camp to prevent sanitation and health issues from arising as a result of overcrowded sites.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I

Useful Links:

<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR33/FMR33.pdf>

[https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/2006\\_idps\\_en\\_icrcexternalposition.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/2006_idps_en_icrcexternalposition.pdf)

[www.who.int/hac/techguidance/tools/manuals/who\\_field\\_handbook/annex\\_7/en/](http://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/tools/manuals/who_field_handbook/annex_7/en/)

[http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/field\\_protection\\_clusters/Zimbabwe/files/Framework\\_for\\_Resettlement\\_IDPs\\_Zimbabwe\\_EN.pdf](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/field_protection_clusters/Zimbabwe/files/Framework_for_Resettlement_IDPs_Zimbabwe_EN.pdf)

