

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has risen dramatically in recent years, exceeding 83 million by the end of 2024.¹ Internal displacement is driven mainly by new and escalating conflicts but also by climate disasters.

This brief highlights the need for joined-up humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts, a so called “HDP nexus approach” to strengthening the work to find solutions to internal displacement. Sida supports a number of development interventions aimed at providing solutions for IDPs and affected communities, complementing humanitarian assistance.

This brief provides an overview of the normative framework for the rights of IDPs, including to durable solutions. The brief also shares examples from Sida programs in Africa. The brief can be used by Sida, Swedish Embassies, humanitarian, development, peace and climate partners, working with support to durable solutions for IDPs and communities affected by internal displacement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internal displacement disrupts lives, livelihoods, cultural identity and social ties of entire communities, making them more vulnerable to negative impact from a wide range of humanitarian and development challenges.

In the last five years, **the global number of IDPs has risen sharply**, increasing from 50 million in 2019 to 83 million in 2024 (box 1).² **Sub-Saharan Africa alone is home to 38,8 million IDPs, or nearly 50% of the global share.**³ More than two-thirds of these IDPs are displaced because of conflicts in Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Nigeria and Ethiopia.⁴ IDPs continue to constitute the majority of all people that have been forced to flee globally (60%).⁵ Due to climate related crises, over 200 million people are estimated to be living internal displacement in 2050.⁶

Some 8.2 million IDPs displaced by conflict returned to their area of origin in 2024. However, as many returned to fragile peace and security conditions and socio-economic situations, this may not be a lasting solution for all. Many IDPs remain trapped in cycles of return and renewed displacement.⁷

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), the increasing figures are the result of crises and lack of solutions, as well as a

“collective failure to address the underlying causes of displacement. Issues such as poverty, inequality, instability and climate change drive movements year after year, adding newly displaced people to those already living in displacement and forcing many IDPs to move again, increasing their vulnerabilities with each new flight.”⁸

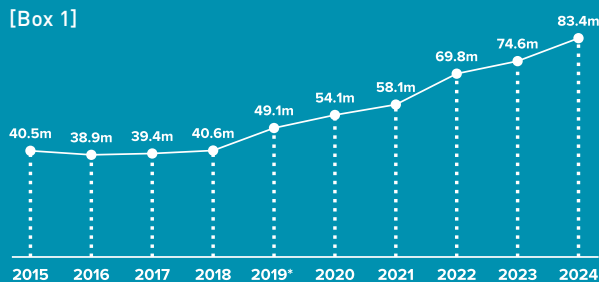
The HDP nexus approach aims to increase collaboration and synergies across humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts, including in the context of internal displacement. The HDP nexus approach supports durable solutions by addressing root causes of conflict, strengthening peoples’ resilience and reducing humanitarian needs.

While efforts and approaches to addressing internal displacement have significantly evolved in recent years, gaps and limitations persist.

2. SWEDISH POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OBJECTIVES

The Swedish Government’s reform agenda for development cooperation aims to strengthen “synergies between development assistance and migration policy” and sets out the intention develop collaboration and “synergies between humanitarian, development assistance and peace-building”.⁹

[Box 1]



Total number of IDPs in millions
*First year disaster data is available

Most Swedish bilateral development cooperation strategies in fragile and conflict-affected contexts encourage increasing the linkages between HDP efforts. In a number of protracted displacement contexts, Sida has thus integrated a HDP nexus approach that supports development-oriented solutions programs for IDPs and communities affected by displacement, complementing humanitarian assistance.

Further, Sida's internal Operational Strategy on Migration and Development in Development Cooperation 2024-2026 has durable solutions for forcibly displaced people, including IDPs, as one of its four key priorities. It places synergies between humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts at the center as a key approach. As the strategy notes,

*"[m]igration and forced displacement often occur in the intersection between developmental challenges, conflicts, and humanitarian needs, areas where Sida's work and experience provide added value."*¹⁰

3. THE INTERNATIONAL NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

The 1998 **UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement** constitute the key international standard on internal displacement world-wide. While not binding on States, they restate and compile human rights and humanitarian law relevant to IDPs. According to the Guiding Principles, IDPs are

*"persons or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or habitual places of residence, particularly due to armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border".*¹¹

As the Guiding Principles celebrated their 20th anniversary in 2018, a three-year, multi-stakeholder platform was initiated within the UN system and the GP20 Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for IDPs 2018-2020 was launched.¹² The goal was to reinforce strategic and collaborative multi-stakeholder dialogue, action and resources at national, regional and global levels.¹³

The 2010 **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons** is a human rights-based framework that should guide the search for solutions. According to the Framework, a durable solution is achieved when IDPs

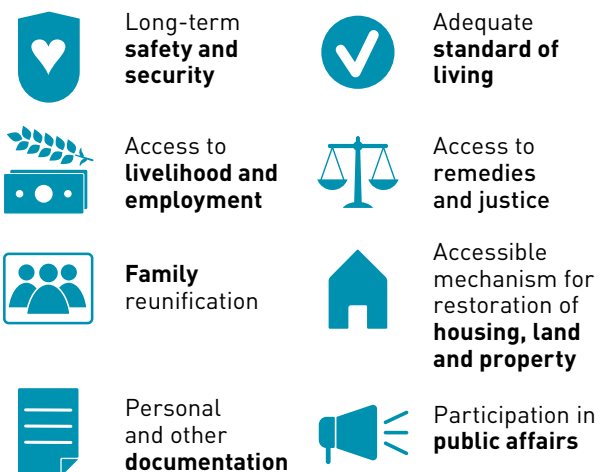
*"no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement."*¹⁴

Durable solutions for IDPs **can be achieved through:**¹⁵

- Sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (referred to as **"return"**)
- Sustainable **local integration** in areas where IDPs take refuge (referred to as **"local integration"**)
- Sustainable integration in another part of the country (referred to as **"resettlement/relocation"**)

The IASC Framework also lays out **eight inter-linked criteria, underpinned by the principle of non-discrimination**, that can be used to assess progress towards durable solutions and guide programming efforts (box 2).

Box 2. IASC FRAMEWORK FOR IDPS: 8 criteria.



Source: IASC Framework

At the regional level, the 2009 **African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa – the Kampala Convention**¹⁶ puts Africa at the forefront of progress in addressing internal displacement. It is the only legally binding regional instrument that addresses all causes and phases of internal displacement. As a result, many countries in Africa have developed their law and policy and invested in measures to address internal displacement.

4. TOWARDS A DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED APPROACH TO SOLUTIONS

In 2019 the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) initiated a **High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement** to better resolve situations of protracted internal displacement. The Panel pointed to the need for a new approach to solutions for IDPs, built on nationally-owned actions and supported by a broad coalition of actors from development and peacebuilding communities.

In its 2021 report, the Panel stressed the need to “go beyond addressing internal displacement as only a humanitarian crisis” in order to seize opportunities for solutions (box 3).¹⁷

In 2022, to implement the recommendations of the Panel, the UNSG launched **the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement**¹⁸ and appointed a **Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement** for two years.

In 2023, the IASC commissioned a comprehensive **Independent Review of Humanitarian Responses to Internal Displacement**.¹⁹

In 2024, a **UN System-Wide Approach to Internal Displacement** was prepared by 28 UN entities.²⁰

Box 3. High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement Recommendations:

1. Make solutions nationally owned, whole-of-government priority,
2. Political will is key and should be catalyzed,
3. Ensure the whole of society is invested,
4. Make better use of the capacities of the private sector for solutions,
5. Make the UN fit for purpose and accountable for solutions,
6. Harness international financing for solutions,
7. Strengthen effective use of internal displacement data,
8. Address the drivers of displacement,
9. Strengthen the quality of protection and assistance to IDPs and host communities,
10. Sustain momentum and ensure robust follow-up.

5. BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SOLUTIONS PATHWAYS

In the joint 2025 **UN Sustainable Development Group and IASC Guidance on Solutions to Internal Displacement**,²¹ the UNSG Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement summarized the experiences of two years working with **15 pilot countries**,²² gathering evidence and good practices for an enhanced approach around development-focused solutions processes. Early lessons from the 15 pilot countries have provided insights into building blocks which are complementary to humanitarian assistance, to foster development-focused solutions pathway adaptable to a specific country context.

The joint guidance should be read in tandem with the IASC Framework and calls for more joined up action amongst humanitarian, development and peace actors that have yet to bring sufficient systematic change at the country level. A detailed Policy brief “Bridging humanitarian aid and development finance” provides an overview of potential international and domestic, public and private financing.²³

The Guidance includes **seven building blocks for**

shifting to development-focused solutions pathways adaptable to a specific country context:

- 1. Laying the groundwork early:** Responses to displacement situations should be planned from day one with a medium to long-term perspective in mind, aiming to contribute to establishing a foundation for sustainable development-led solutions with the goal of promoting solutions from the outset of a crises and to prevent displacement from becoming protracted.
- 2. Ensuring robust government leadership:** While IDPs often manage to find solutions independently, creating an environment that fosters these solutions and implementing them at scale requires strong government leadership at both national and local level.
- 3. Ensuring that displaced communities drive decisions:** The greatest force behind solutions pathways are displaced persons themselves. They must be empowered to shape, participate in and own the development of their own solution pathways.
- 4. Building clear solutions pathways:** All-of-Government solutions strategy is essential for setting priorities within a broader ecosystem of laws and policies.
- 5. Paying for solutions:** Providing solutions for IDPs requires significant investments in infrastructure, particularly in housing and delivery of basic services. Displacement often results in accelerated urbanization, calling for investments in upgrading of existing urban areas and in planned urban growth.
- 6. Gathering evidence:** Data is the cornerstone of solutions to internal displacement as it informs policymaking, facilitates context-specific interventions and allows for ongoing progress measurement.
- 7. Ensuring solutions last:** In many countries, addressing barriers to solutions requires the engagement of national actors to build political will and capacity for effective pathways for all IDPs.

6. SIDA'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS

DRC and Ethiopia host among the highest numbers of IDPs globally, mainly due to conflicts. The below two country examples from DRC and Ethiopia show how Sida's support in internal displacement contexts can contribute to finding solutions for IDPs.

DRC: Return of IDPs in Tanganyika through collaboration between development and humanitarian actors

DRC was one of the first countries to implement a nexus approach aligned with its national development plan. Sida and the Swedish Embassy in Kinshasa have actively contributed to this work and to significant developments in recent years, with increasing rec-

ognition of the relevance of the nexus approach, both within the government and the humanitarian community. The IASC mapping of good practices for a nexus approach DRC (2024) highlights some good examples of this, including improved coordination structures and the relevance of the Nexus Donor Group (co-chaired by Sweden and Belgium).²⁴

The Government, UN, NGOs and donors developed a “**Collective Outcome**”²⁵ related to reducing internal displacement. Three so called nexus provinces were identified, based on the political stability, the withdrawal of MONUSCO and the return of IDPs to these areas. One of the nexus provinces was Tanganyika, in the east, which experienced inter-ethnic violence in 2020-2021, resulting in the displacement of over 500,000 people.

Further, a nexus structure was created at the national and provincial levels. In the nexus provinces, **nexus coordination platforms** were created under the direction of the local authorities, to coordinate the operationalization of the HDP nexus approach. This meant that prioritization could be based on synergies and complementarity to avoid fragmentation and duplication of work. According to on the IASC mapping referred to above for DRC: “In the first three nexus pilot provinces, the nexus provincial coordination platforms identified priority territories and joint results frameworks, to achieve collective outcomes aligned with the provincial governments’ development plans.” This means that partners decided to focus on a few territories to converge resources on, instead of all territories of the provinces.

The nexus structure has also strengthened leadership and ownership of the government, as well as generated a broad commitment from donors and NGOs. The Swedish Embassy contributed to the overall prioritization process with other donors, both through political dialogue and development interventions.

Concrete results: In the province of Tanganyika, the nexus approach has contributed to peace and durable solutions for IDPs. Return has been enabled by, among other factors, support to the development of public services, agricultural development and income-generating activities. In Nyunzu, Tanganyika, Sida facilitated broad collaboration during 2022-2023 between different actors, such as the provincial government, UNICEF, WFP/FAO, UNHCR, IOM and civil society, contributing to reducing the risk of conflict in the region. By re-establishing state social services, such as, education and healthcare, as well as contributing to water supply and agricultural development, 130,000 IDPs have been able to return.²⁶

Based on the positive results in Tanganyika, Sweden has taken the lead in coordinating donors to actively contribute to sustainable solutions for IDPs throughout the country.

Ethiopia: Relocation of IDPs in Oromia and Somali region

Sida and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) support the program “Strengthening Resilience of Disaster-affected Communities Through Durable Solutions in Oromia and Somali regions in Ethiopia” together with IOM/FAO/UNHABITAT.

The overarching objective is to contribute to durable solutions through improved conditions for sustainable socio-economic recovery and peaceful co-existence of disaster affected communities with particular attention to vulnerable groups, while strengthening local government capacities in responding to the need of internal displacement.

Box 4.

Outcome areas: The program has four specific outcome areas. Each of the three UN partner is responsible for one outcome, while the fourth is a joint area to ensure complementarity, coordination, and lessons learnt:

Outcome 1: Target communities are supported to relocate, return, and (re)integrate through the implementation of community-based planning and multi-sectoral recovery interventions aimed at building community cohesion and resilience (main responsible IOM);

Outcome 2: Enhanced economic status of vulnerable members in displacement-affected communities through facilitated opportunities for livelihood diversification options through on-farm and off-farm interventions and increased access to finance (main responsible FAO);

Outcome 3: Regional and woreda administrations can facilitate sustainable reintegration of IDPs through the woreda development (main responsible UN Habitat);

Outcome 4: The Government’s capacity in mainstreaming durable solutions in its programmes is maintained and enhanced (all UN agencies).

The point of departure for the program is the **Government’s Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI)**. This provides a principled operational framework for durable solutions and shapes multi-sectoral and collective programs for return, relocation and local integration of IDPs. Somali and Oromia regions are geographical priority areas for DSI interventions. The initiative also contributes to the **Somali Regional State Durable Solutions Strategy 2022-2025**.

DSI takes a **whole of society approach**. It pursues a nexus-based, multi-dimensional and integrated approach to enable communities to move towards

recovery and resilience. It also employs durable solutions actions that enhance their coping mechanisms against future shocks to anthropogenic disasters and natural hazards. The project provides a multi-pillar intervention based on solutions-based programming.

Guided by **community-centered operational framework**, the program allows for coordinated and integrated approaches aimed at generating legal, material and physical protection for displacement affected communities, by creating synergies between operational activities for urban-rural linkages, community cohesion, livelihoods, access to housing, land and property and access to basic services.

Initial results include the voluntary relocation of 500 IDP households from Qoloji to Beyahoum close to the Shabelle river where they engage in agriculture and animal rearing. In 2024, the project relocated IDP households, supported economic resilience, strengthened governance, and enhanced environmental protection in project sites. Key initiatives included cash transfers, infrastructure development, peacebuilding, settlement planning, market access, and legal training, ensuring sustainable resettlement and improved livelihoods for displaced and host communities. Displacement solutions were advanced through

rangeland restoration, livelihood diversification, and market access efforts. It provided wheat seeds, live-stock distribution, and business training to thousands. Cash-for-work enhanced infrastructure, while peacebuilding networks fostered stability. Environmental initiatives included tree planting and waste management. Training programs strengthened governance, tenure security, and resilience-building, supporting sustainable integration and economic development across affected communities.

Lessons learned: The project was intended to generate lessons learned and to be replicated at scale, but this has not yet taken place. The achievement of durable solutions requires a comprehensive multi-sectoral approach, which the program provides somewhat, but to a limited extent. Durable access to health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation would require involvement of other partners, which has not been the case yet. The support by the UNSG Special Adviser has created a momentum in Ethiopia for promoting durable solutions to internal displacement. However, as the legal framework is missing, durable solutions are insufficiently integrated and mainstreamed in development frameworks at all levels.

Endnotes

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- 15 Ibid.
- 16 African Union, 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa ("Kampala Convention"), October 2009.
- 17 UN Secretary General, Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future, September 2021.
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- 19 IASC, Independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement, March 2024.
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- 21 UNSDG-IASC, Guidance on Solutions to Internal Displacement, February 2025.
- 22 The 15 pilot countries were Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Vanuatu and Yemen. These countries were chosen because they host half of the global IDP population and the national governments showed readiness to develop durable solutions in partnership with the UN.
- 23 UN Office of the Special Adviser on Internal Displacement, IOM, UNDP, UN Habitat, Policy Brief: Financing solutions to internal displacement Bridging humanitarian aid and development finance, December 2024.
- 24 IASC, Country Brief on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus 2024: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), October 2024.
- 25 OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019DAC, noting that "collective outcome" refers to a commonly agreed measurable result or impact enhanced by the combined effort of different actors, within their respective mandates, to address and reduce people's unmet needs, risks and vulnerabilities, increasing their resilience and addressing the root causes of conflict, pp. 7-8.
- 26 Note: Sida uses the number of 130,000 IDP returns based on the annual report by UNICEF DRC 2023, as a precaution, instead of the number currently used by UNICEF of more than 240,000 returns. See further, UNICEF, Adopting a Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approach in Nyunzu, Peacebuilding and the provision of better services encourages displaced people to return home, October 2024.