

**Power of humanity**

Council of Delegates of the International  
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**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS  
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Geneva, Switzerland  
8 December 2019

**Strengthening Implementation of the Movement Policy on Internal  
Displacement: Ten Years On**

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENT**

**Document prepared jointly by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the  
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

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## **Executive summary**

The number of internally displaced people is not decreasing and nor are their needs. Despite the urgency of this global challenge, the issue has not been discussed Movement-wide since 2011. The 2019 Council of Delegates presents a timely opportunity for the Movement to come together around the topic of internal displacement, reaffirm its engagement and clarify its position and priority areas. Once the Movement's position on urgent IDP-related challenges has been examined, the Movement as a whole will be able to ask States to do their part as well. The Movement has been addressing internal displacement-related issues worldwide in a variety of ways; however, several shortcomings have been identified in the responses of all the components of the Movement. These shortcomings can be addressed through stronger implementation of the existing Movement Policy on Internal Displacement. The proposed resolution therefore calls for renewed commitment to the existing Movement Policy, in addition to the establishment of three priority areas and the creation of shared platforms and joint tools, in order to live up to this challenge and respond effectively to the needs of all those affected by displacement.

## **Introduction**

Internal displacement is one of the most pressing global humanitarian challenges. By the end of 2018, 41.3 million people were internally displaced as a result of conflict and violence, the highest figure ever recorded. Weather-related hazards accounted for the majority of the 17.2 million new displacements caused by disasters in 2018 and for almost two-thirds of all new displacements.<sup>1</sup> These figures are a stark reminder of the failure to prevent, address and reduce displacement. Internally displaced people (IDPs) are among the most vulnerable, as they often find themselves in precarious and unsafe conditions, with little or no access to basic goods and essential services. They are often unable to rebuild their lives and remain displaced for extended periods of time, sometimes because conflicts last for years, but also because there are obstacles to their local integration or return. Yet their voices remain largely unheard and the response to their needs inadequate. This is particularly the case in urban settings,<sup>2</sup> where growing numbers of vulnerable IDPs living within host communities fall through the cracks. Urban centres have increasingly become destinations for IDPs, which puts an enormous strain on the already overstretched resources of cities and host communities.<sup>3</sup> Significant improvements are still required to reach IDPs dispersed in urban areas and meet their short- and long-term needs, enabling them to find a durable solution. Concrete commitment and action by affected States, donors, humanitarian organizations and development actors are needed to address internal displacement more effectively. In many countries, legal and policy frameworks need to be developed, adapted and/or implemented as a first step in ensuring a consistent, coherent and predictable response to displacement by the responsible authorities.

Although the global policy debate in recent years has mainly focused on refugee and migration issues, overlooking the plight of IDPs, there is currently a global momentum focused on internal displacement thanks to the 20th anniversary of the UN Guiding Principles<sup>4</sup> in 2018 and the

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<sup>1</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019*, Geneva, May 2019, available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019>.

<sup>2</sup> In this report and in the resolution, 'urban settings/areas' and 'cities' are used interchangeably to refer to socially complex and densely built and populated areas that have an influence over a larger area. This includes urban centres of various sizes and their outskirts. 'Urban displacement' refers to internal displacement to and within cities, i.e. rural to urban, inter-urban or intra-urban.

<sup>3</sup> [Displaced in Cities: Experiencing and Responding to Urban Internal Displacement Outside Camps](#).

<sup>4</sup> *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (UN Guiding Principles), UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, 11 February 1998.

10th anniversary of the Kampala Convention<sup>5</sup> this year. Seizing this momentum, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, jointly with UNHCR and OCHA, launched the GP20 Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018–2020. The Plan of Action illustrates the commitment of the UN system, NGO partners and a group of champion States to improving the response to internal displacement. It recognizes the urgent need to do better to advance prevention, protection and durable solutions for IDPs. The ICRC and the IFRC have provided valuable input to the GP20 process,<sup>6</sup> but the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) as a whole has yet to position itself with the same clarity and strength on urgent IDP-related challenges.

The Movement has long been active in addressing the humanitarian needs of individuals and communities affected by internal displacement due to disaster, armed conflict and other emergencies. In 2009, the Council of Delegates adopted the Movement Policy on Internal Displacement, which has its 10th anniversary this year.<sup>7</sup> The Policy is a key document that sets out ten principles to guide the Movement's approach to internal displacement and emphasizes the value of a coordinated and consistent response by all the components of the Movement. Internal processes of strategic reflection within both the ICRC and the IFRC Secretariat have showed that the Movement makes a significant contribution to helping IDPs in a variety of ways. They also highlighted the significance of partnerships with National Societies (NSs) in the implementation of ICRC responses to conflict and violence-related displacement. However, despite the important role played by the Movement and the promising practices that have been developed, gaps exist in the response to internal displacement of all the components of the Movement. The scale and gravity of internal displacement-related needs globally make it vital for the Movement to address these gaps and step up its engagement. The various internal reflection processes found that stronger implementation of the existing Movement Policy would be instrumental in achieving this.

## **Background**

A report on the implementation of the Movement Policy on Internal Displacement was delivered at the Council of Delegates in 2011, as per Operative Paragraph 3 of Resolution 5, which adopted the Policy. The report found that the Policy was not sufficiently known or put to practical use across the different components of the Movement, but the topic has not been further addressed at Movement level since then.<sup>8</sup>

The implementation report identified three main challenges through discussions at field level. The first two concerned the difficulty for NSs to refer to relevant legal international and national frameworks and for all components of the Movement to prevent forced displacement, notably due to difficulties related to the implementation of IHL and other frameworks protecting civilians in situations of armed conflict and the ability to foresee displacement (contingency planning). The third was related to the management of IDP camps.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the implementation report, several internal reflection processes on the issue of internal displacement have recently been carried out by the ICRC and the IFRC, reaching similar conclusions. They highlighted that despite its continuing relevance in providing clarity, focus and guidance for the Movement's approach to internal displacement, the components of

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<sup>5</sup> *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa* (Kampala Convention), 2009.

<sup>6</sup> The ICRC and the IFRC are standing invitees to the Steering Group on the implementation of the GP20 Plan of Action.

<sup>7</sup> [Movement Policy on Internal Displacement \(2009\)](#).

<sup>8</sup> [Implementation Report on the Movement Policy on Internal Displacement, Council of Delegates 2011](#).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

the Movement are not sufficiently aware of the existence of the Movement Policy nor are they implementing it adequately.

Furthermore, preliminary consultations in preparation for the 2019 Statutory Meetings were conducted in February with a group of selected NSs that are actively engaged in preventing and responding to internal displacement from an operational and/or policy perspective. These confirmed the need to step up efforts to address urgent IDP-related challenges in line with the Movement Policy.

## **Analysis**

Both the ICRC and the IFRC have carried out research on the responses to displacement-related issues since the Movement Policy was adopted. The various studies have focused on different aspects of internal displacement, including the practice of NSs, urban displacement outside camps and disaster-related displacement. The findings of the different processes point to the need for the entire Movement to improve its responses in relation to this issue.

A review of NS practices in response to internal displacement, including camp management, conducted jointly by the ICRC and the IFRC in 2018,<sup>10</sup> highlighted a broad NS response reaching millions of IDPs across the globe in a variety of settings (armed conflict, other emergencies and disasters) and through a wide range of activities implemented predominantly in partnership with other Movement partners. The millions of people assisted and the high number of activities implemented exemplify the commitment to adapting responses to the multiplicity of needs, the variety of settings where NSs operate and the many categories of people who benefit from these interventions. The NSs, sometimes with the support of the ICRC or the IFRC, make significant and widespread contributions to the provision of protection and humanitarian assistance to people displaced in camps and camp-like settings.

However, the same review found that there are certain gaps in the response, which can be addressed by strengthening implementation of the existing Movement Policy on Internal Displacement. The findings emphasized the need to increase NS knowledge of applicable legal principles, rules and relevant standards to improve expert staff retention and to capitalize more effectively on existing good practices and lessons learned. It also highlighted the limited capacity of NSs and a lack of common understanding of issues related to camps and collective accommodation, especially with regard to protection and the needs of host communities. The review furthermore found that NSs are less responsive to out-of-camp situations, especially in urban areas, emphasizing the need to increase responsiveness to the needs of IDPs living dispersed in urban settings and their host communities. It also indicated that there is room to increase advocacy efforts to prevent internal displacement by addressing some of its causes and to seek durable solutions. The review strongly recommended staff capacity strengthening to improve the overall response to internal displacement. The recommendations concluding this review highlight the relevance of the Movement Policy, particularly Principle 3 (displacement prevention) and Principle 4 (durable solutions).

The issue of internal displacement in urban settings outside camps was further explored by the ICRC in 2018.<sup>11</sup> Case studies were conducted in Somalia, Nigeria, Iraq and Honduras to understand the experience of urban IDPs and their hosts. The overall humanitarian response was also analysed. The study concluded that the current response is inadequate, falling short in three areas: it tends to focus on camps, although a large number of urban IDPs settle within

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<sup>10</sup> [The review of NS experience with IDPs and camp management \(2018\)](#) was based on a survey of 42 of the most involved National Societies, interviews with representatives from the Movement and other relevant organizations, and a literature review.

<sup>11</sup> [Displaced in Cities: Experiencing and Responding to Urban Internal Displacement Outside Camps.](#)

host communities rather than in camps; it often struggles to incorporate long-term considerations, focusing on people's bare survival; and it relies mostly on blanket interventions, which means that IDPs' specific needs often remain unaddressed. As far as the Movement is concerned, the findings highlighted that it is playing an important role in trying to address the needs of urban IDPs and their hosts, but it is not immune to the shortcomings of the current humanitarian response. The conclusion was that the ICRC and other components of the Movement must do better to help urban IDPs rebuild their lives and to address the impact of their displacement on host communities by engaging at different levels – cities, neighbourhoods, households and individuals – through a combination of structural interventions and tailored responses.

In 2018, the IFRC Secretariat initiated an internal process of strategic reflection aimed at analysing the dynamics of disaster-related internal displacement (including climate-related and technological disasters) and its intersection with cross-border movements, taking stock of the IFRC's response to identify current gaps and opportunities for future work.<sup>12</sup> This strategic reflection revealed that the Movement has been addressing internal displacement in its various forms for many years, primarily through sectoral interventions, but a more transversal and horizontal approach is needed, consistent with the Movement Policy on Internal Displacement, to deal with the resulting humanitarian and development challenges. The review further highlighted the specific needs of vulnerable people in internal displacement settings as well as the IFRC's strengths in the context of prevention and response. Gaps in protection, advocacy and the implementation of durable solutions were also identified.

The preliminary consultations conducted with selected NSs in February 2019 confirmed the need to step up efforts to address ongoing IDP-related challenges in line with the Movement Policy. Participants expressed their desire for stronger guidance for their respective NSs on the issue of internal displacement, notably for them to become more aware of legal and policy frameworks and engage more proactively in legal advocacy, thereby capitalizing on the Movement's recognized expertise and legitimacy with regard to IHL and disaster law.

To conclude, strengthening implementation of the Movement Policy can help enhance the responses to internal displacement in various respects. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen implementation of Principles 3 (displacement prevention), 4 (durable solutions), 5 (empowering individuals and communities) and 6 and 7 (reminding the authorities of their obligations and supporting them in fulfilling them) of the Movement Policy in order for the Movement's holistic response to have a greater impact on people at risk of displacement, IDPs and host communities.

### **Resource implications**

Various gaps have been identified in the responses to internal displacement. Strengthening the responses will require efforts to raise awareness of displacement-related issues and strengthen the capacity of NSs. This capacity strengthening should seek, in particular, to increase the knowledge of applicable legal principles, rules and relevant standards. There is also a need to increase awareness of camp management issues, including protection-related aspects, associated risks and challenges and the relevant tools and standards that are available.

The IFRC Secretariat's review highlights a need to adapt IFRC systems and structures to implement and operationalize the Movement Policy on Internal Displacement, with emphasis on aspects such as the auxiliary status of National Societies, operational training and capacity building, and collaboration between components of the Movement and external partners.

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<sup>12</sup> The full review will be released in May. The final resolution will include a link to the review.

Other studies show the need to improve the responses in relation to IDPs living dispersed in urban settings, which requires efforts to raise awareness about this particular issue across the Movement.

Improving the understanding of these different aspects of internal displacement across the Movement will require additional resources.

During the review of NS practice, the NSs strongly indicated an interest in the establishment of a dedicated community of practice to improve capacities, formed by protection specialists and focal points across the Movement. The proposed resolution calls upon the Movement to dedicate more resources to strengthening the capacity of NSs, including through the development of a joint training module on the Movement's approach to internal displacement, applicable legal frameworks and relevant standards. In line with the NSs' expressed desire and the findings of different consultations, the proposed resolution furthermore encourages the creation of a dedicated community of practice to serve as a shared platform for building a better common understanding among NSs.

### **Implementation and monitoring**

In order to ensure effective implementation of the resolution and hence the Movement Policy, it is vital for coordinated follow-up to be put in place. The 2021 Council of Delegates will provide an opportune moment to collectively monitor implementation of the proposed resolution, assess existing gaps in the response and consolidate further recommendations for an improved response by all components of the Movement to the needs of all those affected by internal displacement, where necessary.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

In light of the pressing challenges posed by internal displacement worldwide, there is a need for the Movement to step up its engagement on this issue. The 2019 Council of Delegates presents a timely opportunity to put internal displacement back on the table and restate our commitment to strengthening the Movement-wide response to internal displacement-related issues. The existing Movement Policy has proven to be effective to this end, yet insufficiently implemented. It is therefore time to reiterate our commitment to the Policy and to ensure its effective implementation. The proposed resolution identifies three areas of commitment and provides a set of concrete measures to enhance the quality and coherence of the Movement's response. These are consistent with the Movement Policy on Internal Displacement and grounded in the recommendations of the ICRC's study on urban internal displacement, the outcome of the Federation's internal reflection and the ICRC–IFRC jointly-led review of NS practice.

The areas of commitment identified in the proposed resolution are:

1. **Better responding to urban displacement outside of camps.** A growing proportion of IDPs live dispersed within urban environments, often in informal settlements and hazard-prone areas, where basic services and infrastructure are severely inadequate. In order for the Movement to remain a relevant humanitarian actor, it needs to live up to the urban challenge by consolidating and strengthening the expertise of all the components to address the specific needs of IDPs in urban settings outside of camps. The IFRC and National Societies should engage with a wider set of stakeholders, including local governments, professional and civic organizations and networks to contribute to reducing the risks and vulnerabilities of urban communities, including

IDPs. They should also promote equality, inclusiveness and social cohesion, as stipulated by the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. **Strengthening protection from and during displacement.** This entails scaling up legislative and policy work to promote the development and implementation of domestic laws and policies that uphold the rights of IDPs and provide for IDP protection, consistent with the Guiding Principles and the Kampala Convention, as well as strengthening the implementation of IHL in situations of armed conflict. In engaging with communities at risk of displacement, the Movement should seek to help them avoid displacement by preventing the conditions that may compel people to leave but also support them in becoming better prepared by reducing the risks and vulnerabilities people may face upon flight and during displacement. This will require NSs to effectively implement the 'minimum protection approach',<sup>13</sup> as described in the Protection within the Movement framework. In disaster settings, and particularly in situations of climate-induced displacement,<sup>14</sup> the IFRC and NSs must ensure that internal displacement considerations are integrated into all climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and development policies and frameworks. To address risks of displacement, they must support, where relevant, community-based actions for DRR, climate change adaptation, disaster preparedness and resilience building and work with partners and governments to ensure that any relocation planned as a climate change adaptation measure is carried out through a participatory and consultative process with affected communities, in line with the IFRC's Framework for Climate Action towards 2020.
3. **Supporting durable solutions.** The Movement should do its part, in line with its commitment to respond to all phases of displacement and by stepping up its engagement across the full spectrum of durable solutions, to ensure IDPs are able to return safely to their home or place of habitual residence and become sustainably reintegrated there or are provided with concrete alternatives in terms of local integration in the place of displacement or resettlement in another part of the country, based on their decisions and priorities.

The proposed resolution then recommends a set of concrete measures to enhance the quality and coherence of the Movement's response in those specific areas. These measures include systematizing people-centric approaches, increasing resources to strengthen capacities, integrating IDP-related issues and solutions into legislative and advocacy efforts and creating crosscutting tools, such as common training tools and a Movement-wide community of practice serving as a common platform of exchange for all the components of the Movement to promote and monitor implementation of the resolution. The solid implementation of these recommendations, when supported by the necessary resources, will result in improved responses to IDP protection needs, inside and especially outside camps, stronger support for IDP recovery efforts, a better understanding of durable solutions for them and greater attention to the voices of IDPs and their hosts throughout the design of the responses.

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<sup>13</sup> As described in the [Protection within the Movement framework](#), the MPA means that, while remaining focused on service delivery, the Movement actor is able to address the identified protection needs. In this case, it does not assess and address all the protection needs but has the means to react to issues that come to its attention in the course of its activities in cooperation with protection specialists.

<sup>14</sup> According to a World Bank Group report published in March 2018, South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America will have to cope with 143 million people internally displaced due to climate pressures (not including those affected by disasters/extreme weather) unless concerted action is taken at the national and global level. It is estimated that, by 2050, climate change-driven pressure will have directly and indirectly altered mobility patterns. In some cases, people will move in an attempt to adapt to climate change. In others, the impacts of climate change will lead to movements under distress, induce displacement or require planned relocation.