

**DRC Submission related to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons to the 78th session of the General Assembly**  
12 June 2023

DRC Danish Refugee Council welcomes and appreciates this opportunity to submit its evidence- and experience-based recommendations to the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons with a view to inform the Mandate's report to the 78th session of the General Assembly on three themes:

- **Climate change and internal displacement**
- **Internally displaced persons and peace negotiations, mediation and peace processes, and peacebuilding**
- **Sustainable integration and/or reintegration into the communities in which they settle or return to.**

## **I. Climate Change and Internal Displacement**

Displacement, conflict and climate change constitute complex *systems* that interlink, and displacement is rarely caused by one single factor. People's capacity to deal with multiple factors vary greatly from one geographical context to another, and depends also on individuals', households' and communities' own resilience capacities. We know that:

***Climate related events exacerbate existing protection risks:*** Climate related events amplify existing protection risks, threatening the enjoyment of the right to life, physical integrity, an adequate standard of living, self-determination, and development. As such, climate-related changes increase vulnerability to violence and exploitation in a number of indirect ways, contribute to negative coping strategies, and compound gender-related risks<sup>1</sup>.

***Climate Change is a risk multiplier for violent conflict:*** Climate change and environmental degradation affect *other factors* that are known to increase the risk of violent conflict, such as poverty, food insecurity, inequality and human rights violations. Indeed, climate-induced displacement may trigger conflict in receiving areas, where the arrival of IDPs puts pressure on infrastructure, services and the economy of the receiving area, thus accelerating existing competition over scarce resources. Conflict in turn also increases people's as well as societies' vulnerability to climate-related hazards, as it decreases capacity to respond and adapt by destroying infrastructure, governance and social relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> DRC commissioned ODI study: "Addressing Protection Risks in a Climate-changed World: Challenges and Opportunities" (2021), <https://odi.org/en/publications/addressing-protection-risks-in-a-climate-changed-world-challenges-and-opportunities/>

***Extreme weather events might exacerbate existing conflict or foster de-escalation***, depending on the specific dynamics at play. After disasters, popular grievances may deepen, including in relation to the Government's response. At the same time, conflict aggravates the impact of natural disasters (by undermining capacity to respond), pointing to a 'vicious circle'. However, social networks of support have also been known to gain renewed importance in the aftermath of disasters, especially in countries with weak governance.

***Displacement has unpredictable links with climate change***: We may be able to identify various forms of displacement patterns relating to different climate impacts, but we cannot *make predictions* from one specific form of changed climate conditions to the type or level of displacement, because of complex intervening variables. However, we know that several of the drivers of displacement, including conflict and economic conditions, are affected by climate change, and vice versa.

How the effects of climate change impact on displacement depends on a wide range of moderating variables, notably the following:

**Vulnerability factors**: Those most severely affected by climate change are often the groups that already are the poorest and most marginalized. This includes, IDPs as camps and informal settlements, particularly in urban areas, are often placed on low-value / high risk-prone land.

**Socio-economic context**: Impact of climate change on displacement depends on availability of socio-economic opportunities to diversify livelihood strategies.

**Governance**: Policies and actions – or inactions – of governments can also create the conditions for scarcity that lead to prolonged displacement.

**Demography**: Rapid urbanization has increased people's exposure to natural hazards, notably to flood impacts.

### ***Recommended Actions for the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs***

- Ensure climate change and its impacts on protection of IDP human rights are prominent in the UN Secretary General's Call to Action on Human Rights.
- Document good operational practices in the protection of IDP rights in relation to climate change, including collaboration between stakeholders in the analysis, planning and response.
- Conduct further research around climate change and durable solutions and identify ways of considering climate change in the preparation for durable solutions.
- Work collectively with UN agencies and NGOs to ensure 'climate change analysis capacities and processes' are incorporated into humanitarian and development planning processes.

## **II. Internally Displaced Persons in Peace Negotiations or Mediation Processes and in Peacebuilding to Achieve Sustainable Peace**

Peace processes at all levels of a society can play a key role in preventing and addressing conflict as a driver of internal displacement, and thereby contribute to solutions to displacement.

Peace cannot be achieved, nor conflict prevented if such processes do not take point of departure in the deeply rooted causes of conflict - as they are experienced every day by the people who suffer their consequences, including IDPs. There continue to be barriers for IDPs' inclusion and participation in peace processes at all levels as well as considering their human rights, for the relevance and sustainability of these processes.

There is evidence<sup>2</sup> that peace is more likely, and lasts longer, when youth and women are at the table (ref. UNSCR 1325 & 2250). Yet displacement compounds the exclusion of women and youth from all decision-making forums, including peace processes. However, access for women, not least those displaced by conflict, to engage in and influence on security matters, safety issues and peace processes is increasingly under pressure (e.g. Sahel, Afghanistan). Furthermore, access to these women to support them in their peace endeavors is increasingly difficult and risky.

Preventing conflict-induced internal displacement requires national government will and capacity to protect people. In addition, it requires complementary and coherent action by local, national and international actors across the HDP nexus to ensure participation by (and accountability to) those who are directly affected by conflict and internal displacement, and efforts to sustain peace are necessary not only once conflict has broken out but also long beforehand, through the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes<sup>3</sup>.

Peace processes must take into account the increasing number of people displaced by climate change, in combination with accountability of global climate justice and implementation of compensation processes and schemes, to prevent further conflicts and displacement

### ***Recommended Actions for the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs***

- To accelerate the UN's commitment to address and prevent forced displacement, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs should emphasise and advocate for support to Governments to uphold their responsibility to take steps to prevent forced internal displacement, including by protecting and upholding IHL and human rights law.
- Advocate for efforts to ensure a focus on inclusive and participatory peace processes which build on a thorough understanding of root causes, through analysis of conflicts, a bottom-up peacebuilding approach, taking point of departure in an understanding of the perspectives of IDPs and conflict-affected people.
- Emphasize that processes to negotiate, implement and sustain peace (reconciliation and transitional justice initiatives) need to engage youth and women affected by internal displacement - to enhance the chances of achieving sustainable peace and ensure durable solutions for the displaced<sup>4</sup>.
- Special attention is needed to the shrinking space for displaced women to engage and be engaged.
- Build further complementarity and coherence between the Special Rapporteur's Mandate, the UNSG Action Agenda on internal displacement and the UN Sustaining Peace Agenda.
- Pay special attention to the links between climate, conflict and displacement, and housing land and property issues which are often a root cause of conflict and an impediment to peace and durable solutions.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://wps.unwomen.org/participation/> : Women's participation increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20 percent, and by 35 percent the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years.

<sup>3</sup> As underlined by the *Sustaining Peace Agenda* in UNSC resolution 2282 (2016) and UNGA resolution 70/262.

<sup>4</sup> *UNHCR (2019): Tearing down the walls. Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girls' participation in humanitarian settings "It is unrealistic to expect peace agreements in conflict-affected settings to succeed if displaced women and girls are not involved in their development and implementation."*

### III. (Re)integration of Internally Displaced Persons

Much work has been done over the past decades to research, analyse, design, operationalise and advocate for progressing and advancing solutions to internal displacement. Yet, we continue to witness lack of investment in measures to *prevent* internal displacement, *lack of political will* to put a stop to armed conflict, generalised violence and human rights violations leading to internal displacement, coupled with a lack of acknowledgement of the *specific protection and assistance needs of IDPs*, and at times even the very existence of internal displacement. As a result, many situations remain stalled and become protracted which has a huge impact on the lives and rights of IDPs and host communities and pose barriers to the (re)integration and achievement of durable solutions for IDPs. Moreover, we continue to witness forced return and relocation as well as continued discrimination of IDPs after they have returned (or settled elsewhere). This significantly impedes the attainment of sustainable (re)integration of IDPs and durable solutions to their displacement situation.

#### **Recommended Actions for the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs**

- **Advocate that return and relocation movements are not a durable solution - (re)integration is.** A multifaceted, rights-based and AGD-sensitive and inclusive approach is required to make solutions durable and sustainable. *A shift is needed away from the predominant focus on return or relocation movements towards sustainable (re)integration and durable solutions for IDPs.*
- **Ensure respect for the right of IDPs to make an informed and voluntary choice on what durable solution to pursue.** States and other actors must ensure that local integration and settlement elsewhere can be pursued at par with return. Durable solutions must be voluntary and undertaken in safety and dignity, with IDPs being included in solutions planning processes and having clear information on the situation in potential areas of return, settlement or local integration, and the implications any movement might have on existing entitlements and rights afforded while in displacement.
- **Ensure the full spectrum of rights.** Authorities as primary responsible, and HDP actors must work towards the respect, protection and fulfilment of the full spectrum of IDP human rights. Much attention has been given to IDPs' socio-economic rights and inclusion. However, the *full spectrum of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of IDPs* must be ensured - in line with the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs. *Legal aid activities*, including on housing, land and property rights, targeting IDPs, authorities, host communities are and must be an integral part of collective efforts to ensure sustainable (re)integration and durable solutions.
- **Promote retainment of protection and livelihood capacities of IDPs.** The protracted and volatile nature of conflict-induced internal displacement with risks of renewal of conflicts and displacement, coupled with climate-induced displacement points to the need for iterative and on-going efforts to understand the nature and characteristics of internal displacement today and in the future. Equally important is the need to *prioritise the strengthening and retainment of protection and livelihood capacities of IDPs*. This includes considering the specific protection risks, vulnerabilities, discriminatory practices and capacities of different groups, including women, youth, children and those affected by internal displacement. This way conducive conditions for (re)integration and solutions can be reinforced while still in displacement, thereby strengthening IDPs' self-reliance and resilience and enabling them to seize future opportunities for durable solutions. Further, it is important to *identify, support and strengthen existing local and national protection systems and mechanisms*, which are critical to sustainable (re)integration and solutions.
- **Ensure IDP participation and inclusion in (re)integration and solutions efforts.** It is crucial that authorities and HDP actors ensure the *engagement, inclusion, and participation of IDPs and other*

*displacement-affected people in durable solution decision making, planning and implementation processes.* Civil society actors have an important role to play, including in mobilising support and solidarity by bringing attention to and documenting displacement challenges, local IDP protection risks and needs.

- ***Expand the use of the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs – as the foundation for truly sustainable (re)integration and durable solutions.*** The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs remains as relevant as ever, as the rights-based authoritative framework, *setting the parameters, responsibilities and facilitating the needed collective and coordinated efforts* by authorities, IDPs, host communities, and HDP actors on sustainable (re)integration and durable solutions for IDPs.

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