



INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Our approach and strategy for 2016–2019

ADOPTED ON 17 MAY 2016

BACKGROUND

The ICRC has long worked to protect and assist internally displaced people (IDPs)¹ around the world, as part of our mandate to help people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.² Our Institutional Strategy 2015–2018 places a renewed focus on addressing internal displacement as a priority.³ Reflecting this, the Directorate has adopted a strategy on internal displacement for 2016–2019. The strategy defines our ambition to strengthen our operational response to internal displacement and to help shape policies and decisions affecting IDPs and the broader discourse surrounding this issue. It is oriented by our reading of current global trends and challenges posed by internal displacement:

- ▶ The number of IDPs and the time they spend displaced because of armed conflict and other violence have continued to grow.⁴ This shows parties to conflicts, States and the international community are failing to prevent displacement from happening in the first place and to provide durable solutions to millions of IDPs. It also reflects the increasingly protracted and chronic nature of many armed conflicts.
- ▶ Discussions on how to address the causes of internal displacement tend to focus on the roots of armed conflict, thereby failing to thresh out the causes of displacement *during* armed conflict. This has resulted in a lack of recognition of the connection between violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and displacement; as a result, the wider international community's

¹ The ICRC does not have its own definition of an IDP. We work with the description most commonly used within the international community, one provided in the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which refers to “persons or groups of persons 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”. United Nations, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 11 February 1998: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G98/104/93/PDF/G9810493.pdf?OpenElement>, all web addresses accessed October 2016.

² The ICRC uses “other situations of violence” (“other violence”) to refer to “situations in which violence is perpetrated collectively but which are below the threshold of armed conflict. Such situations are characterized in particular by the fact that the violence is the work of one or several groups made up of a large number of people.” *International Review of the Red Cross (IRRC)*, Vol. 96, No. 893, February 2014, pp. 275–304: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-review-of-the-red-cross/article/the-international-committee-of-the-red-cross-icrcs-role-in-situations-of-violence-below-the-threshold-of-armed-conflict/64183418A12D456A04D7BB59529547D5>.

³ ICRC Strategy 2015–2018 (adopted by the Directorate in June 2014), in particular strategic objective 2.5: <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4203-icrc-strategy-2015-2018-adopted-icrc-assembly-18-june-2014>.

⁴ By the end of 2015, there were 40.8 million IDPs worldwide, representing some two-thirds of all people displaced by armed conflict and violence – the highest number on record. See Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *GRID 2016 - Global Report on Internal Displacement*: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2016/2016-global-report-internal-displacement-IDMC.pdf>. See also UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015*: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unhcrsharedmedia/2016/2016-06-20-global-trends/2016-06-14-Global-Trends-2015.pdf>.

engagement with States and parties to conflict has often failed to emphasize the need to respect and ensure respect for IHL, and to prevent displacement in the first place.

- ▶ The public debate is often centred on refugee and migration issues. In so doing, it tends to overlook the urgent plight of IDPs, or to consider internal displacement only through the prism of migration i.e. as a first step to further cross-border movement. Thus, the focus is mostly on action intended to reduce the flow of migrants, rather than on finding ways to protect and assist IDPs.
- ▶ In line with the global trend toward urbanization, people are increasingly displaced to, or within, urban areas; most IDPs today live in private accommodation or with host families in cities and towns. Urban displacement brings specific challenges that cannot be addressed effectively by simply replicating solutions from rural emergencies. Tailored approaches to urban settings are urgently required that meet the needs of IDPs and their host communities and combine humanitarian and development work.
- ▶ There is growing awareness of the importance of collecting more accurate data on internal displacement to underpin evidence-based action. This includes understanding the different needs and situations of IDPs, and their ability to cope with displacement, by taking account of factors such as gender, age and disability.
- ▶ Developing and implementing legal and policy frameworks on protecting and helping IDPs, at national and regional levels, are increasingly recognized as essential to dealing effectively with internal displacement.

Our operational approach

The ICRC's operational approach to internal displacement features several distinct elements:

- ▶ We take a **holistic view** of internal displacement, seeing it as a dynamic situation made up of distinct phases, whose impact extends beyond the people who are directly affected by it. We acknowledge that IDPs have particular needs or are in a particularly vulnerable situation because of their displacement, which often exacerbates the difficulties they already face as a result of the surrounding armed conflict or other violence. However, instead of responding to IDPs' needs in isolation, we seek to address them alongside the negative consequences that internal displacement can have on other parts of the population, such as host communities and those who stay behind, while also considering those who are at risk of displacement.
- ▶ We are concerned with **all phases of displacement** – the full cycle of events surrounding displacement, from the circumstances preceding it to people's return, local integration or resettlement. We seek to understand what is specific to each phase so as to define appropriate responses. We take account of both immediate problems and those that may arise in the future, so that we can work to mitigate the consequences of displacement while helping IDPs progress towards a durable solution to their plight.
- ▶ Wherever possible, we seek to **prevent displacement** from occurring in the first place by removing some of its causes. In armed conflicts, violations of IHL, notably of the rules protecting civilians from the effects of hostilities, often trigger displacement. Furthermore, forced displacement, despite being prohibited by IHL,⁵ occurs too frequently. Therefore, ensuring that all parties – State and non-state actors alike – abide by IHL and protect the civilian population can reduce displacement. We try to do so through dialogue and training, and by providing legal support for the domestic implementation of IHL. Restoring essential services, maintaining critical infrastructure during protracted armed conflict

⁵ In both international and non-international armed conflicts, the forced displacement of the civilian population for reasons related to the conflict, in whole or in part, by the parties to armed conflict is prohibited, unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand. See: Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, Article 49(1); Additional Protocol II of 1977, Article 17; ICRC, Customary IHL Database, Rule 129.

and building resilience among resident communities can also help to avoid displacement. Prevention is key during the pre-displacement phase, but throughout the different phases of displacement we continue our work to counter the risk of multiple displacements. At the same time, we seek to ensure people's right to seek safety in another part of the country is upheld, in accordance with international law, recognizing that displacement may be the only coping mechanism that people have in armed conflicts to escape danger or hardship.

- ▶ We usually **help IDPs that live outside camps**, in host communities or in remote areas, where there tend to be fewer or no other humanitarian agencies and the ICRC is better placed to reach and work with IDPs and locals, including those hosting the IDPs. However, we may also get involved in delivering services in IDP camps to complement the work of other agencies, or in exceptional circumstances, in managing camps. In all these cases, we often operate with the local National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society ("National Society").

Where we are now

Following the adoption of the Institutional Strategy 2015–2018, an adviser on internal displacement was appointed to our Protection Division to act as a focal point within the organization. A working group was also formed to align the positions and work of the different units and departments at our headquarters.

In 2016, over half of our delegations, including those in countries affected by major internal displacement, carried out multidisciplinary activities specifically designed for IDPs or benefiting the civilian population as a whole, residents and IDPs alike. While we will continue to focus on preventing displacement by promoting respect for IHL during armed conflict and ensuring civilians are protected and can meet their needs *in situ*, we are working harder to develop dialogue with authorities on their responsibility to protect and assist IDPs, and provide community-based approaches to build their resilience.

In February 2016, we launched a study to take stock of progress on implementing the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). The findings were published in a report that identified lessons learnt, best practices and key challenges to States' efforts to translate the Kampala Convention into real improvements for IDPs.⁶ The report is being used by ICRC delegations in Africa in discussions with the authorities on States' obligations to protect and assist IDPs, and to support the adoption of national legal frameworks and policies to those ends. At the continental level, it informs our dialogue with the African Union and multilateral/sub-regional forums on promoting ratification and implementation of the Kampala Convention. In other regions, we will use the report's findings and recommendations to show what States can do to address internal displacement more effectively at the national and regional levels.

In order to strengthen the capacities of the ICRC, we have redesigned several training courses to include sessions on internal displacement. In the coming years, more work is needed to reinforce our staff members' knowledge of institutional policies and guidelines on internal displacement and to raise awareness of the strategy. Likewise, in the interest of a coherent response, we need to improve National Societies' awareness and implementation of the internal displacement policy⁷ agreed by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement ("the Movement").

⁶ ICRC, *Translating the Kampala Convention into Practice: A Stocktaking Exercise*, ICRC, Geneva, October 2016.

⁷ 2009 Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Resolution 5, "Movement policy on internal displacement" (adopted in November 2009): <https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1124.pdf>

As part of our continuing efforts to help develop normative and regulatory frameworks and policies and shape the general debate on internal displacement, we have scaled up our contacts with governments, other organizations and experts. We have also made statements on internal displacement in several multilateral forums, and provided input to a number of external reports and documents on IDP-related topics.

STRATEGY FOR 2016–2019

5.1. Vision

The ICRC wants to be seen as a humanitarian expert on internal displacement, because of our effective work with IDPs during armed conflicts and other violence and how we shape policy and debate on the issue at the global, regional and national level.

We want to be able to intervene in all phases of displacement, combining different methods but always working in line with the Movement's Fundamental Principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence. We want to bring something that complements what the authorities and other agencies can provide, in terms of access, expertise and response capacity, to better meet the needs of IDPs. We will maintain an operational focus on preventing displacement and responding to acute displacement – areas in which we have strong comparative advantages.

We want to help meet the specific needs of IDPs. We recognize that they are not a homogeneous group of people and may have particular concerns related to gender, age, disability and so on. Therefore, we will continue to combine prevention, protection and assistance activities – working with our Movement partners – to help them, people at risk of being displaced and those who are affected by the displacement of others, particularly host communities.

Within the Movement, the ICRC aims to exercise clear leadership on issues related to internal displacement caused by armed conflict and other violence. Whenever possible, we will continue to give priority to operational partnerships with National Societies in the design and implementation of our activities. We will promote effective coordination and cooperation with and among National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (“the Federation”) to help implement the Movement's policy on internal displacement.

5.2. Objectives

The strategy sets out three objectives that correspond to the three levels of our engagement on the issue of internal displacement: operational response, in-house knowledge and policy and diplomacy. The overarching goal is for us to prevent internal displacement as far as possible and better protect and assist IDPs.

► **Objective 1. Consolidate and strengthen the ICRC's multidisciplinary response to situations of internal displacement by:**

- deepening understanding of trends in and dynamics of internal displacement by better documenting and analysing causes, circumstances and patterns;
- improving multidisciplinary analysis and identification of IDPs' specific needs in each phase of displacement;
- engaging with States and parties to armed conflict to discuss their responsibility to protect and assist IDPs during each phase of displacement, in accordance with applicable law and standards (e.g. IHL, international human rights law, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Kampala Convention, domestic law);

- implementing community-based activities with people at risk of displacement – to help them prepare to, or avoid the need to, flee their homes – and with IDPs and host communities – to strengthen their resilience.
- ▶ **Objective 2. Develop knowledge and competencies needed, within the ICRC and the overall Movement, to address internal displacement by:**
 - raising awareness of the Movement’s policy on internal displacement and other key reference documents among National Societies;
 - working with the Federation to share lessons learnt and develop common approaches and methods, incorporating more systematically the issue of displacement in field-level discussions already taking place within the Movement on emergency-response activities;
 - raising awareness and deepening understanding of our policies and guidelines on internal displacement among ICRC staff; sharing best practices and lessons learnt in responding to the different phases of displacement, and promoting these throughout the entire organization.
- ▶ **Objective 3. Enhance the ICRC’s capacity to influence normative and regulatory frameworks and policies related to internal displacement, and the surrounding public debate by:**
 - raising awareness of the relevance of IHL to prevent displacement and protect IDPs during armed conflict;
 - promoting the ratification and full implementation of the Kampala Convention in Africa; stimulating the development of national and, where there is interest by States, regional normative and regulatory frameworks or policies on internal displacement in other regions;
 - increasing efforts to highlight our distinctive approach and responses to internal displacement; showcasing the Movement’s operations around the world more effectively;
 - offering analysis that is strongly anchored in our operational experience, giving our positions/messages credibility by virtue of being rooted in the reality on the ground.

5.3. Focus

In our work to meet these objectives, we must pay particular attention to four parts of the problem of internal displacement: (1) the possible connection between internal displacement and migration; (2) the impact of gender, age, disability, etc. on people’s experience of displacement; (3) urban displacement; and (4) camp management.

5.3.1. Internal displacement and migration

IDPs and migrants may have similar concerns.⁸ Both have left their homes and find themselves outside their familiar environment, where they may have difficulty in accessing essential services because of a lack of information or personal documents. They are particularly at risk of discrimination and abuse, and may be separated from their families. For some IDPs, internal displacement can become the first step of an arduous journey, as they may cross borders to seek protection, assistance or better prospects after failing to get them in their own countries.

However, the two groups should not be confused nor should internal displacement be considered only in the light of its possible connection with cross-border movements. The majority of people who are displaced by armed conflict or other violence today remain in their country, while only some of those who cross borders have first become IDPs. That is why we at the ICRC regard IDPs and migrants as

⁸ The ICRC defines migrants as people who leave or flee their country of origin or habitual residence to go abroad to seek opportunities or safer and better prospects. This includes all types of migrants while recognizing the special protection of refugees and asylum seekers.

distinct groups, for which we have developed separate approaches that reflect the different legal frameworks that apply to them. At the same time, we do not ignore the possible connection between internal displacement and migration, and the challenges each presents, when determining how to respond to each issue effectively.

To ensure the ICRC's operations and policies remain relevant to internal displacement, migration, and their possible connection, we will follow these general principles:

- ▶ We will adopt a comprehensive approach to the challenges of internal displacement and migration where there is a continuum between the two. We will focus on maximizing protection and assistance for both IDPs and migrants, taking into account the cumulative negative effects on individuals who move more than once.
- ▶ We will seek to influence the wider debate on IDPs and migrants, raising awareness of their particular concerns among the public and governments. We will stress the need for a sharper focus on common and separate policies towards the two groups of people. We will argue strongly that internal displacement be regarded as a critical humanitarian issue in its own right, and that the specific predicament of IDPs be recognized and addressed as a matter of priority. At the same time, we will argue that, where there is a continuum between internal displacement and migration, measures should be taken to address the needs of migrants (including refugees) in transit and destination countries *and* to strengthen the protection of IDPs and resident populations affected by armed conflict and other violence in their countries of origin.

5.3.2. Factoring in gender, age, disability and other characteristics that may influence people's experience of displacement

Certain communities and individuals can be more at risk of displacement. During armed conflicts or other violence, groups may be specifically targeted because of their ethnicity, religion, politics, etc., raising their risk of displacement.

Similarly, people can be put in a more vulnerable situation because of their gender, age or disability, and may struggle to cope with the circumstances of their displacement as a result. IDP-related responses should be based on data that goes beyond basic information and account for the specific circumstances, challenges and needs of each individual.

As a result, and in line with our efforts to develop evidence-based responses that ensure we are accountable to the people on whose behalf we work, we commit to the following:

- ▶ We will strengthen the capacity of field teams to collect disaggregated data related to displacement; we will also carry out more comparative analyses of the needs of IDPs vis-à-vis those of host communities. These efforts will move beyond improving technical assessments in different disciplines towards creating tools that provide a multifaceted picture of the displacement situation. This will help to define and implement appropriate responses, while generating synergies between the different programmes.
- ▶ We will consult IDPs and host communities to gain a more accurate understanding of their needs, concerns and intentions and enable their active participation in the process of designing, implementing and evaluating the programmes for them.

5.3.3. Urban displacement

Internal displacement to, or within, urban areas is often hard to see and monitor as it tends to be an "invisible" phenomenon. Urban IDPs are, in most cases, dispersed within host communities, and may seek anonymity out of fear. This is especially the case where urban violence is prevalent and people are displaced in a more gradual and less obvious fashion.

Urban displacement can take place in different scenarios. During armed conflict, for example, IDPs may flee to or within cities where fighting is ongoing. In such a setting, IDPs may be in danger because of the hostilities and at risk of secondary displacement. Or IDPs may have found refuge outside the conflict-affected area, but have to move again within the same city or to another one as they become the target of armed groups involved in organized crime. A distinct scenario is where IDPs may be relatively safe in urban areas but find themselves in places where infrastructure is poor, services overstretched and without adequate access to housing, health services, education or the means to make a living. Meeting these structural challenges requires expertise and capacities for which public bodies and development agencies are usually best placed. However, humanitarian agencies can still play an important role. By working alongside development agencies, they can help them identify priority areas where their work could improve infrastructure and public services for entire communities. Humanitarian agencies are also well placed to argue for tailored measures to be taken by the authorities that address the particular concerns of IDPs, while ensuring that they are still provided for by the services available to local residents.

In the light of these challenges, and taking into account our broader ambition to become a benchmark organization for humanitarian action in urban settings, we commit to the following:

- ▶ We will expand in-house expertise and explore innovative ways to address urban displacement, building on our operational experience in protracted armed conflicts and urban violence. We also aim to contribute in a meaningful manner to the debate on best practices and the different approaches to protecting and assisting IDPs affected by armed conflict and other violence in urban settings.
- ▶ We will try to help bridge the gap between humanitarian and development responses to protracted urban displacement by building stronger relationships with development agencies.

5.3.4. Camp management

Camps should not be the default solution to displacement.⁹ However, they may be necessary in some circumstances, e.g. during mass influxes of IDPs, when immediate aid must be concentrated in certain areas. At other times, camps may arise spontaneously as IDPs regroup in informal settlements, or occupy schools or other buildings in villages and towns.

In such circumstances, if there is no other agency on the ground and we are in a position to take responsibility, the ICRC may consider getting involved in setting up and/or managing camps for a certain period of time, as we have occasionally done in the past. Alternatively, a National Society may be better placed to manage a camp, or may be requested to do so by the government or other agencies.

Given our commitment to a consolidated Movement approach to internal displacement, including camp management, and to continuing to play a lead role in protection efforts within the Movement, we will follow these general principles:

- ▶ We will, as far as possible, support National Societies that become involved in camp management. In particular, we will focus on helping them incorporate protection-related considerations into how they manage camps. We will also work together with them to ensure that camps are run in accordance with all relevant legal and operational standards and the Movement's Fundamental Principles. This is particularly important where camps are used to stop IDPs from moving somewhere safer and more stable, whether that be within their country or across a border into another.

⁹ The ICRC has already highlighted some of the possible negative implications of IDP camps elsewhere. See ICRC, *Internal Displacement in Armed Conflict: Facing up to the Challenges*, ICRC, Geneva, 2009: https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_4014.pdf

- ▶ We will work with the Federation to build an overview of National Societies that are involved in camp management, or may have the skills to do so, and consolidate the Movement's best practices and lessons learnt from previous experiences. These efforts will help the entire Movement be better equipped to manage camps, when required.

Conclusion

The strategy shows how the ICRC can continue to carry out meaningful humanitarian work that meets the needs of internally displaced people and their host communities, and enable us to become a benchmark organization for this issue. The strategy also defines our positions on certain parts of the problem of internal displacement, taking account of emerging challenges and recent developments on a global scale. A detailed action plan and a monitoring tool with indicators and benchmarks is being drawn up to monitor progress in implementing this strategy. The ICRC is assigning additional human resources for certain areas – for instance in data collection and analysis, policy and humanitarian diplomacy, and camp management by other parts of the Movement.