

# **Internal Displacement and Durable Solutions:**

## **A Strategic Framework for Humanitarian Coordination and Gender-Responsive Approaches**

**By Ahmed Osman**

### **Executive Summary**

This comprehensive study examines the current global landscape of internal displacement, with a particular focus on durable solutions, coordination mechanisms, and gender-responsive approaches. Drawing on the latest data from authoritative sources including UNHCR and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), this analysis provides evidence-based insights into the scale, causes, and impacts of internal displacement worldwide, while highlighting strategic frameworks for effective response.

The study reveals that internal displacement has reached unprecedented levels, with 83.4 million people displaced globally as of 2024. This represents a concerning 64% increase since 2018, driven primarily by conflict, violence, and climate-related disasters. The analysis demonstrates that effective solutions require multi-stakeholder coordination, gender-sensitive programming, and localized approaches that address the specific needs of different displaced populations.

Key recommendations include strengthening coordination mechanisms between UN agencies, national governments, and local authorities; implementing gender-responsive policies that recognize the differentiated impacts of displacement; and developing comprehensive monitoring frameworks to track progress toward durable solutions. This study provides a foundation for evidence-based policy development and programmatic interventions to address one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time.

# Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Context
2. Global Internal Displacement Landscape
3. Regional Analysis and Displacement Patterns
4. Causes and Drivers of Internal Displacement
5. Gender Dimensions of Internal Displacement
6. Durable Solutions Framework and Implementation
7. Coordination Mechanisms and Multi-Stakeholder Approaches
8. Challenges in Addressing Internal Displacement
9. Case Studies of Successful Interventions
10. Recommendations and Way Forward
11. Conclusion
12. References

## 1. Introduction and Context

Internal displacement represents one of the most significant humanitarian challenges of the 21st century. Unlike refugees who cross international borders, internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain within their own countries but have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, natural disasters, or development projects. Their situation often receives less international attention despite the scale of the crisis and the complex vulnerabilities they face.

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of internal displacement globally, examining trends, patterns, and responses with a particular focus on durable solutions, coordination mechanisms, and gender-responsive approaches. The analysis is grounded in the latest data from authoritative sources, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), supplemented by insights from academic research and field-based case studies.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, established in 1998, remain the primary international framework for addressing the needs and rights of IDPs. These principles emphasize that national authorities have the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting IDPs within their jurisdiction. However, the international community plays a crucial role in supporting governments that lack the capacity or willingness to fulfill these obligations.

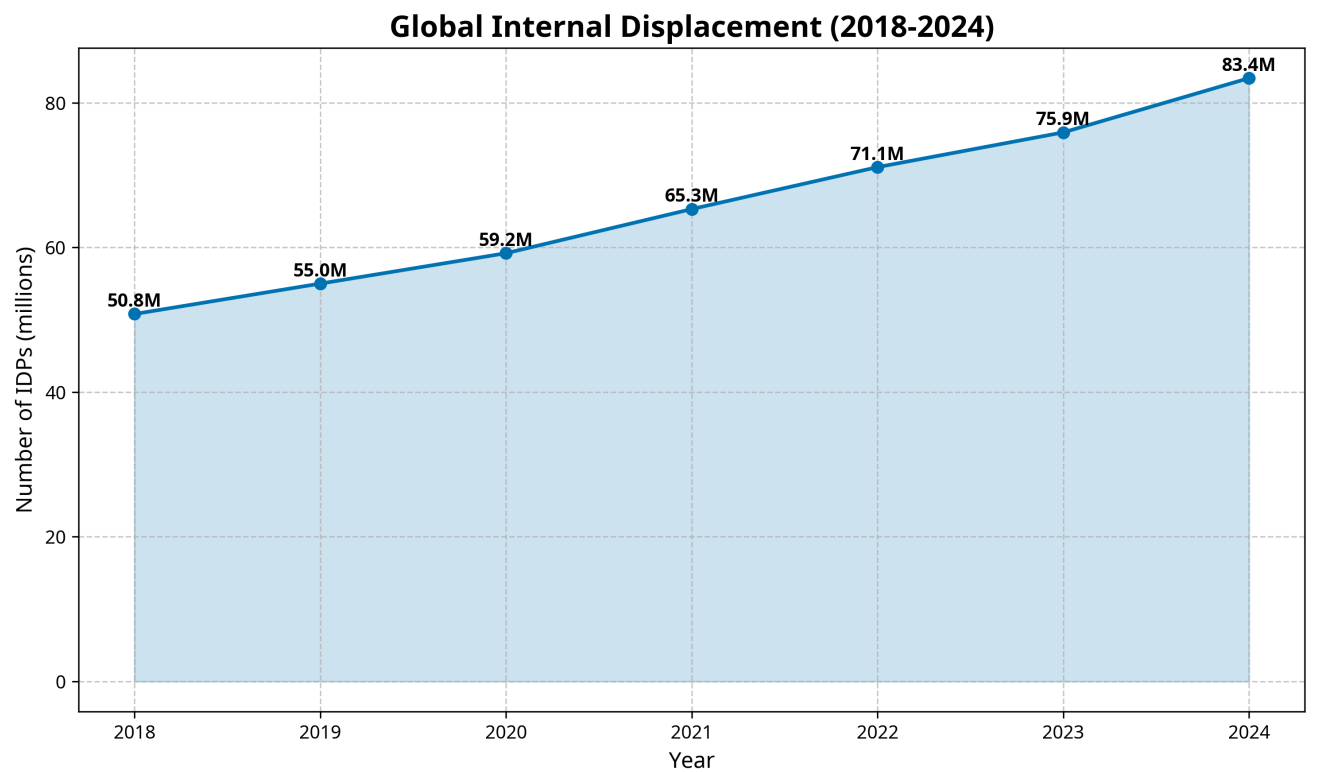
In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need for more effective coordination mechanisms, gender-responsive approaches, and sustainable solutions to internal displacement. The UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal

Displacement (2023) and the establishment of the UN System-wide Approach to Internal Displacement represent significant steps toward addressing these challenges more comprehensively.

This study aims to contribute to this evolving discourse by providing evidence-based insights into the current state of internal displacement, analyzing existing response frameworks, and offering recommendations for more effective interventions. By focusing on coordination mechanisms and gender-responsive approaches, the analysis addresses critical gaps in current practice and highlights opportunities for more inclusive and sustainable solutions.

## 2. Global Internal Displacement Landscape

The global scale of internal displacement has reached unprecedented levels, with a consistent upward trajectory over the past decade. As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of internally displaced persons worldwide has increased from 50.8 million in 2018 to 83.4 million in 2024, representing a 64% increase in just six years.



This alarming trend reflects both new displacements and the protracted nature of many displacement situations. According to IDMC data, while millions of people are newly displaced each year, many existing IDPs remain unable to find durable solutions, leading to a cumulative increase in the total displaced population. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, with a notable acceleration in the rate of increase between 2019 and 2021.

Several key factors contribute to this global crisis:

1. **Intensification of conflicts:** Escalating violence in countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Ukraine, and Myanmar has forced millions to flee their homes in recent years.
2. **Climate change impacts:** Increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, including floods, droughts, and storms, have displaced millions, particularly in vulnerable regions.
3. **Protracted displacement:** Many IDPs remain displaced for years or even decades due to unresolved conflicts, lack of political solutions, or inadequate support for return or integration.
4. **Limited durable solutions:** Insufficient investment in sustainable solutions, including return, local integration, or resettlement elsewhere, has contributed to the growing number of IDPs globally.

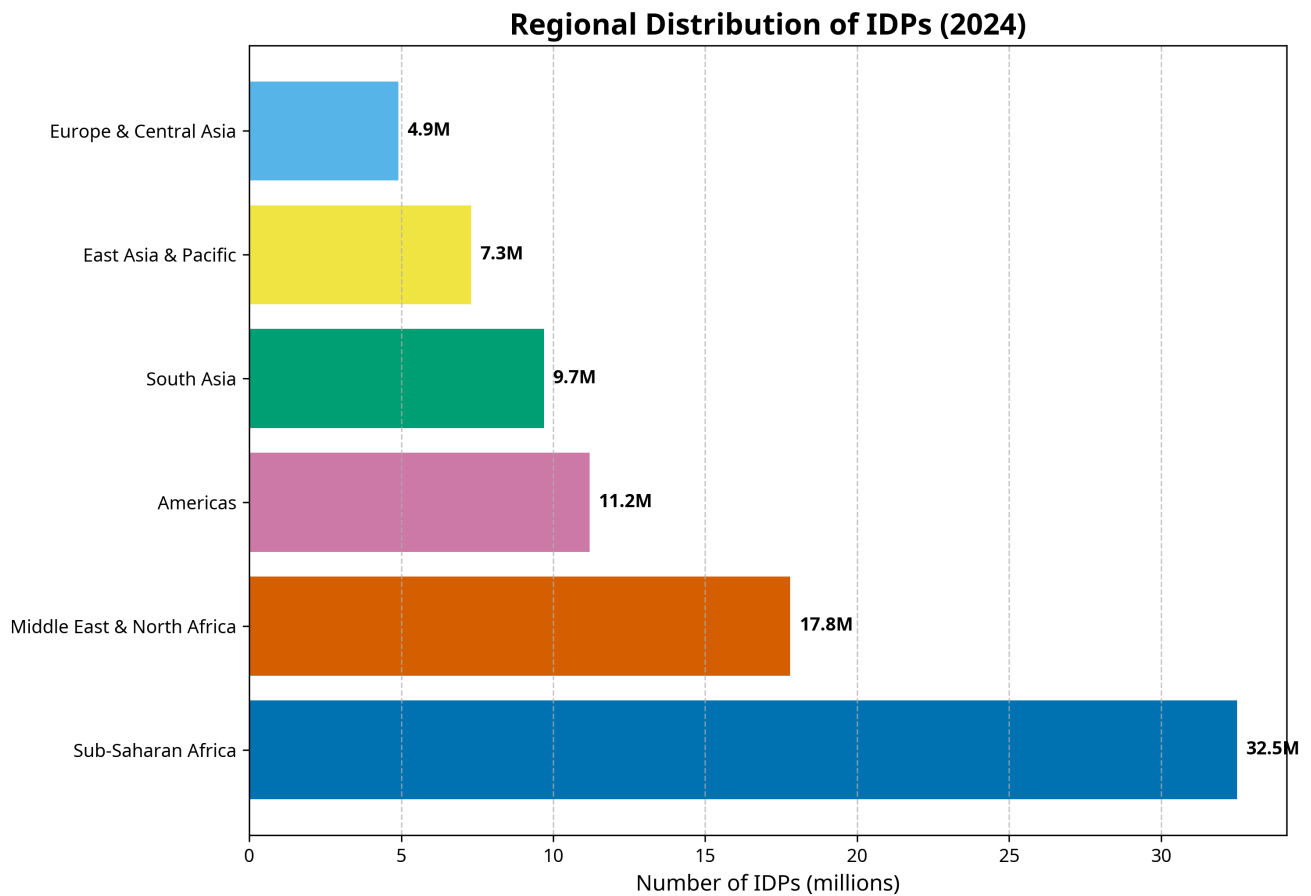
The global distribution of internal displacement is highly uneven, with certain regions bearing a disproportionate burden. Sub-Saharan Africa hosts the largest number of IDPs (32.5 million), followed by the Middle East and North Africa (17.8 million), and the Americas (11.2 million). This regional variation reflects different conflict dynamics, governance challenges, and vulnerability to natural disasters.

The economic impact of internal displacement is substantial, with the World Bank estimating that the global cost exceeds \$20 billion annually. These costs include immediate humanitarian needs, longer-term development challenges, and lost economic opportunities for both displaced populations and host communities.

Understanding this global landscape is essential for developing effective responses. The scale and complexity of internal displacement necessitate coordinated action across humanitarian, development, and peace actors, with particular attention to the specific needs of different displaced populations, including women, children, and other vulnerable groups.

### 3. Regional Analysis and Displacement Patterns

The regional distribution of internally displaced persons reveals significant disparities in both the scale and nature of displacement across different parts of the world. As illustrated in Figure 2, Sub-Saharan Africa hosts the largest number of IDPs, followed by the Middle East and North Africa, the Americas, South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia.



## Sub-Saharan Africa

With 32.5 million IDPs, Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for approximately 39% of the global total. The region faces multiple displacement drivers, including:

- **Conflict and violence:** Ongoing conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Sahel region have resulted in massive displacement.
- **Climate vulnerability:** Drought in the Horn of Africa and flooding in West and Central Africa have forced millions to flee their homes.
- **Governance challenges:** Weak institutions and limited capacity to respond to crises exacerbate displacement and hinder durable solutions.

The situation in Sudan exemplifies these challenges, with over 9 million people internally displaced as of mid-2024 due to the conflict that erupted in April 2023. This represents one of the fastest-growing displacement crises globally and has overwhelmed humanitarian response capacities.

## Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa region hosts 17.8 million IDPs, primarily due to protracted conflicts. Key displacement contexts include:

- **Syria:** After more than a decade of conflict, Syria remains one of the world's largest internal displacement crises, with 6.8 million IDPs.
- **Yemen:** The ongoing conflict has displaced over 4 million people internally, with humanitarian access severely constrained.
- **Iraq:** Despite some returns, 1.2 million people remain displaced, many for over eight years.

In these contexts, displacement is often protracted, with limited prospects for return due to ongoing insecurity, destroyed infrastructure, and property disputes.

## Americas

The Americas region hosts 11.2 million IDPs, with displacement driven by:

- **Gang violence:** Criminal violence in Central America and Mexico has forced millions to flee their homes.
- **Political instability:** The crisis in Venezuela has resulted in both internal displacement and cross-border refugee movements.
- **Natural disasters:** Hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes regularly displace communities across the Caribbean and Central America.

Colombia continues to host the largest IDP population in the region (5.2 million) due to decades of conflict, despite the 2016 peace agreement.

## South Asia and East Asia Pacific

These regions host 9.7 million and 7.3 million IDPs respectively, with displacement driven by:

- **Conflict:** Afghanistan, Myanmar, and the Philippines face significant conflict-induced displacement.
- **Natural disasters:** Bangladesh, India, China, and the Philippines experience regular displacement due to floods, cyclones, and earthquakes.
- **Development projects:** Large-scale infrastructure projects have displaced communities across both regions.

## Europe and Central Asia

With 4.9 million IDPs, this region has seen a significant increase in displacement since 2022 due to:

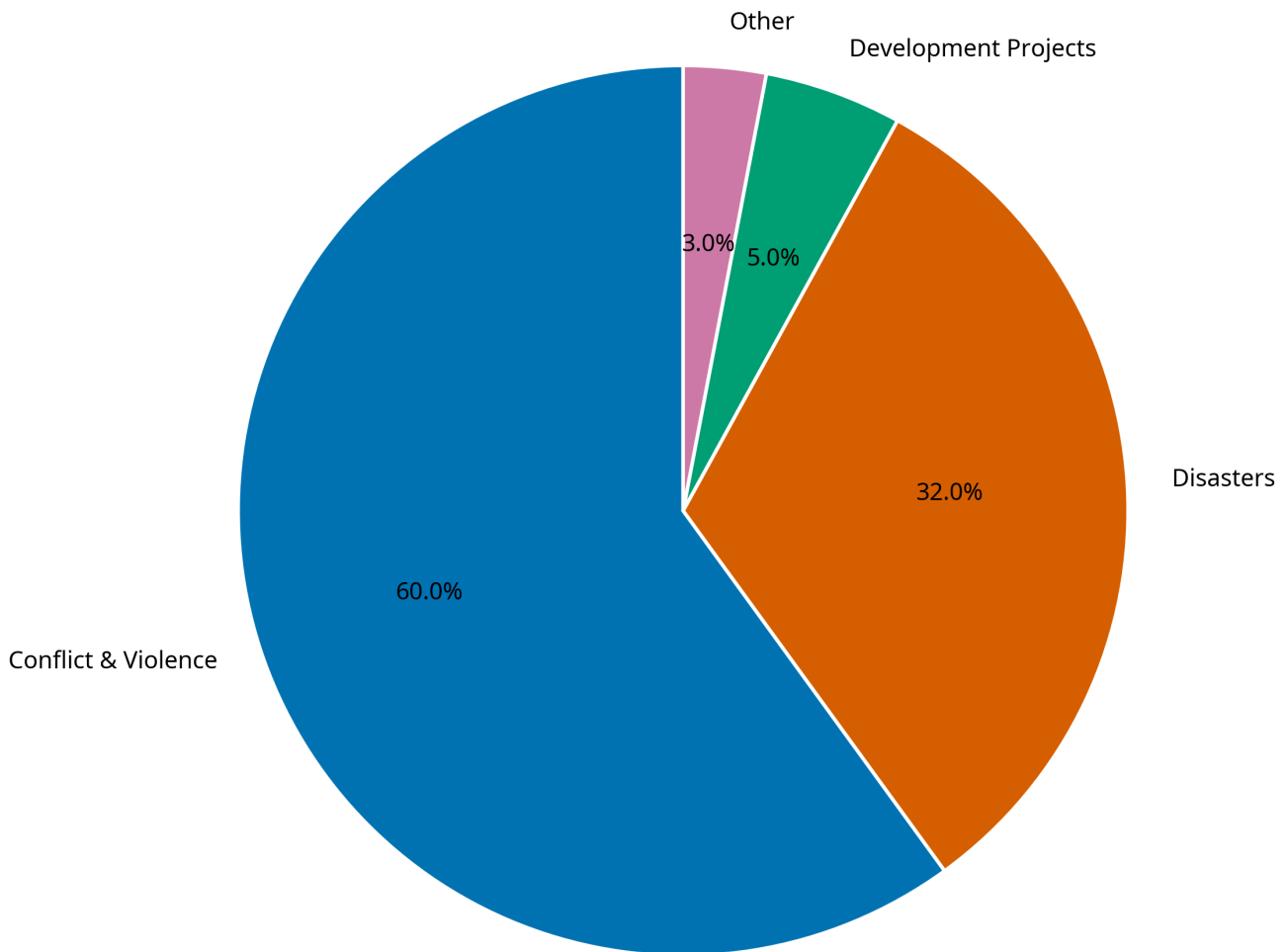
- **Ukraine conflict:** The Russian invasion has resulted in the displacement of over 3.7 million people within Ukraine.
- **Protracted situations:** Unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus continue to affect displaced populations.

These regional patterns highlight the need for context-specific approaches to addressing internal displacement, while also recognizing common challenges across regions. Effective responses must be tailored to the specific drivers and dynamics of displacement in each context, while drawing on global best practices and coordination mechanisms.

## 4. Causes and Drivers of Internal Displacement

Internal displacement is triggered by various factors, often interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Understanding these causes is essential for developing effective prevention strategies and sustainable solutions. As illustrated in Figure 3, conflict and violence remain the primary drivers of internal displacement globally, followed by disasters, development projects, and other factors.

## Causes of Internal Displacement (2024)



### Conflict and Violence

Accounting for approximately 60% of global internal displacement, conflict and violence remain the most significant drivers. This category encompasses:

- **Interstate conflicts:** Such as the Ukraine conflict, which has displaced millions since 2022.
- **Civil wars:** Ongoing in countries like Syria, Yemen, and South Sudan.
- **Communal violence:** Ethnic or religious tensions leading to displacement in Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Nigeria.
- **Criminal violence:** Gang activity in Central America forcing communities to flee.

Conflict-induced displacement is often characterized by its protracted nature, with IDPs unable to return home for years or even decades due to persistent insecurity, destroyed infrastructure, and property disputes. The average duration of conflict-induced displacement now exceeds seven years, highlighting the challenge of finding durable solutions.



The impact of conflict-induced displacement extends beyond physical relocation, affecting social cohesion, economic opportunities, and psychological well-being. Women and girls face particular risks, including gender-based violence, while men and boys may be vulnerable to forced recruitment by armed groups.

## Disasters and Climate Change

Natural disasters account for approximately 32% of internal displacement globally. This category includes:

- **Sudden-onset disasters:** Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires that force immediate evacuation.
- **Slow-onset events:** Drought, desertification, and sea-level rise that gradually render areas uninhabitable.
- **Climate change impacts:** Increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

In 2023 alone, disasters triggered 32.6 million new displacements globally, with floods accounting for the largest share (14.2 million), followed by storms (13.1 million). The Asia-Pacific region is particularly affected, experiencing 80% of all disaster-induced displacements.

Climate change is exacerbating these trends, with the World Bank projecting that up to 216 million people could be internally displaced due to climate impacts by 2050 if no action is taken. This highlights the urgent need for both mitigation and adaptation strategies, as well as specific policies addressing climate-induced displacement.

## Development Projects

Development-induced displacement accounts for approximately 5% of the global total, though this figure is likely underestimated due to limited monitoring. This category includes displacement resulting from:

- **Infrastructure projects:** Dams, roads, and urban renewal initiatives.
- **Resource extraction:** Mining, oil, and gas projects.
- **Conservation efforts:** Creation of protected areas.

While development projects can bring significant benefits, they often disproportionately impact marginalized communities who may not be adequately consulted or compensated. The World Bank estimates that 15 million people are displaced annually by development projects, highlighting the need for stronger safeguards and more inclusive planning processes.

## Other Factors

The remaining 3% of displacement is attributed to various factors, including:

- **Generalized insecurity:** Situations that fall below the threshold of armed conflict but create unsafe living conditions.
- **Human rights violations:** Persecution, discrimination, or targeted violence against specific groups.
- **Environmental degradation:** Pollution or resource depletion rendering areas uninhabitable.

These diverse causes of displacement necessitate multifaceted responses that address both immediate humanitarian needs and underlying drivers. Prevention strategies must focus on conflict resolution, disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and inclusive development planning, while response mechanisms need to be adaptable to different displacement contexts.

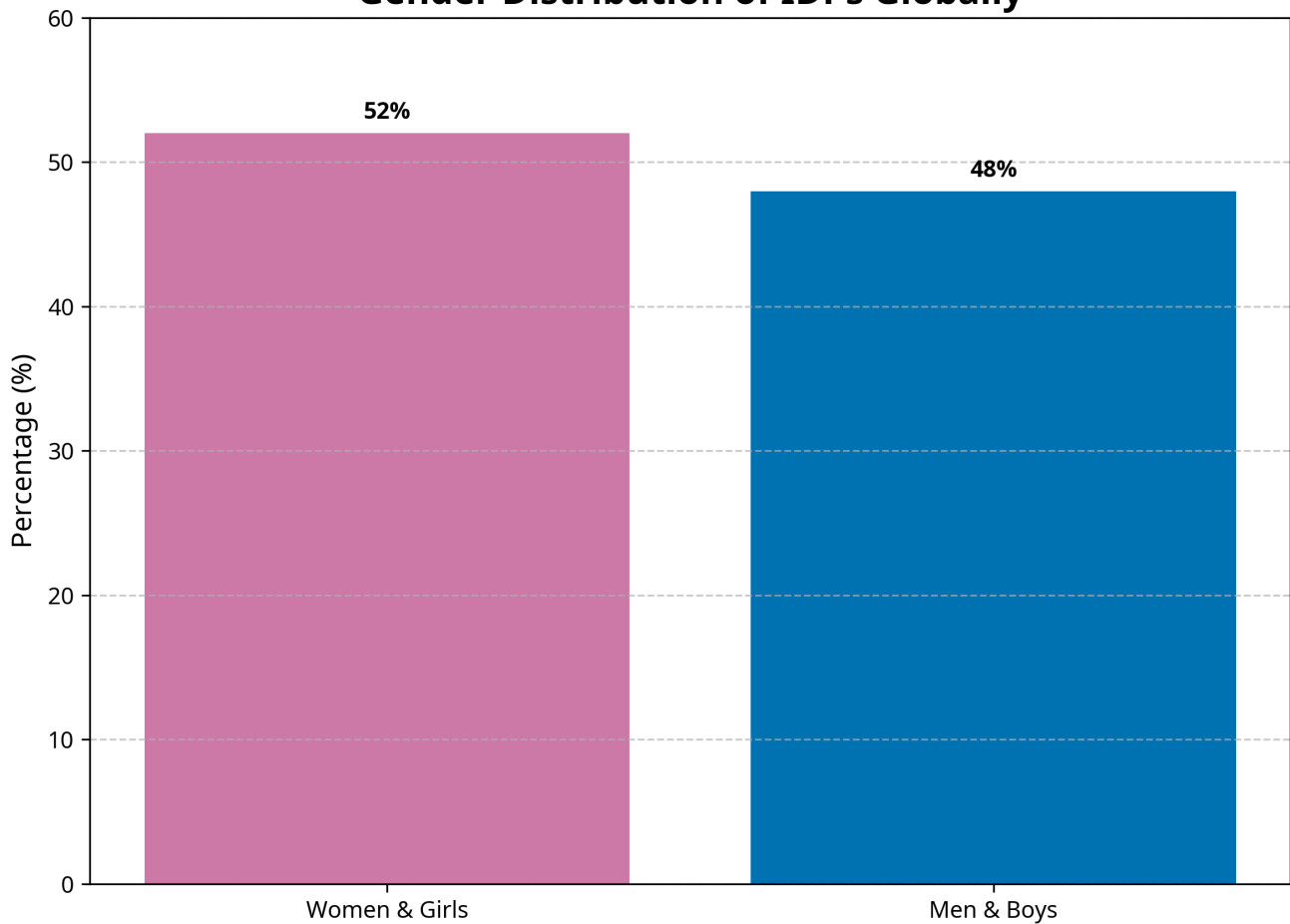
## 5. Gender Dimensions of Internal Displacement

Internal displacement affects women, men, girls, and boys differently, with gender intersecting with other factors such as age, disability, and ethnicity to shape experiences, vulnerabilities, and capacities. Understanding these gender dimensions is essential for developing effective and inclusive responses.

### Gender Distribution and Differential Impacts

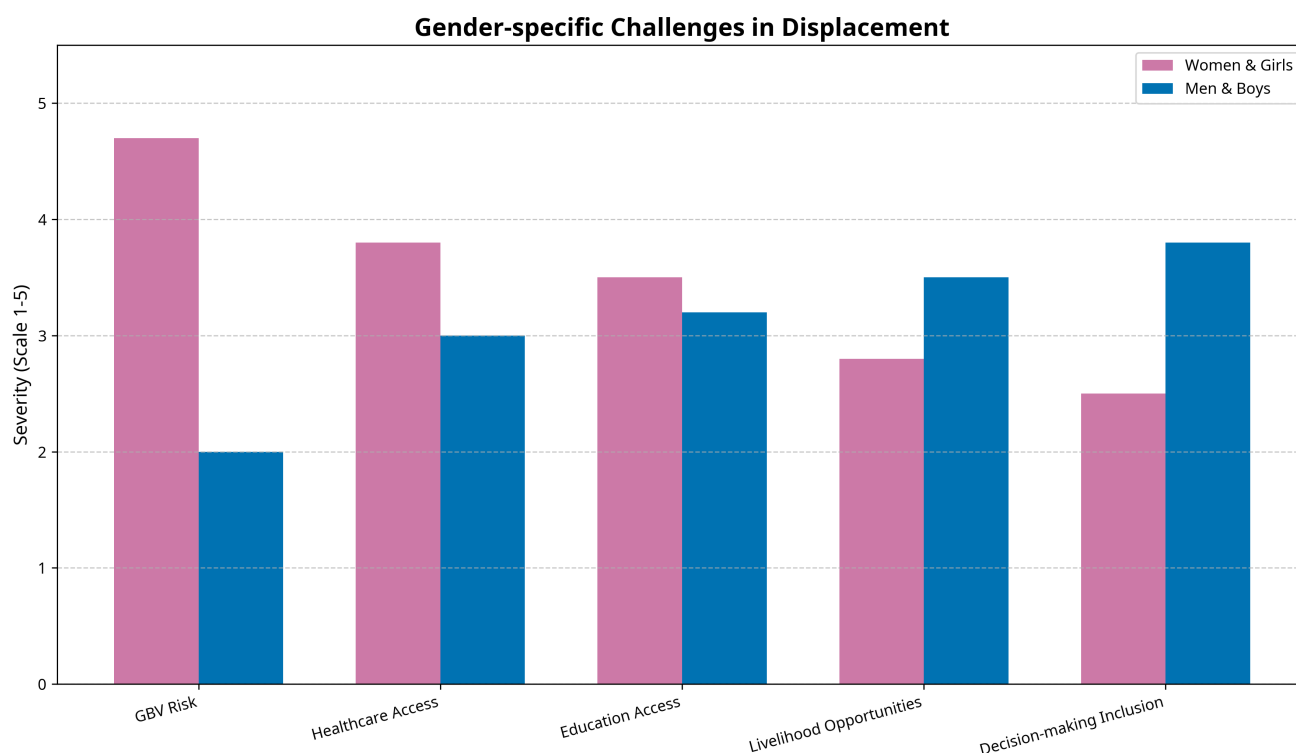
As illustrated in Figure 4, women and girls constitute approximately 52% of the global IDP population, though this proportion varies across contexts.

## Gender Distribution of IDPs Globally



While this overall distribution appears relatively balanced, it masks significant variations across regions and displacement situations. In some conflict contexts, women and children may represent up to 80% of the displaced population, particularly when men remain behind to protect property or engage in conflict.

The impacts of displacement are highly gendered, with women and men facing different challenges and risks, as illustrated in Figure 8.



## Specific Challenges Faced by Women and Girls

Women and girls in displacement settings often face heightened risks of:

- **Gender-based violence (GBV):** Rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and exploitation typically increase during displacement. The IDMC Gender Dynamics report (2023) indicates that displaced women and girls are up to 10 times more likely to experience GBV compared to non-displaced populations.
- **Limited access to healthcare:** Sexual and reproductive health services are often inadequate in displacement settings, contributing to increased maternal mortality and morbidity. According to UNFPA data, 60% of preventable maternal deaths occur in displacement contexts.
- **Restricted educational opportunities:** Displaced girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys, due to factors including security concerns, early marriage, and household responsibilities.
- **Economic insecurity:** Women often face greater challenges accessing livelihoods and income-generating opportunities in displacement, with the gender gap in economic participation widening during crises.
- **Exclusion from decision-making:** Despite their central role in family and community resilience, women are frequently marginalized in formal decision-making processes related to displacement response and solutions.

## Specific Challenges Faced by Men and Boys

Men and boys also face gender-specific challenges during displacement:

- **Targeted violence:** Men and boys may be at higher risk of arbitrary detention, forced recruitment, or targeted killing based on assumptions about their potential combatant status.
- **Psychosocial impacts:** Loss of traditional roles and livelihoods can lead to significant psychological distress, with limited access to appropriate mental health support.
- **Restricted mobility:** In some contexts, men face greater restrictions on movement due to security concerns, limiting their access to services and livelihood opportunities.
- **Pressure to provide:** Cultural expectations to provide for families persist during displacement, creating significant stress when economic opportunities are limited.

## Gender-Responsive Approaches

Addressing these gender dimensions requires comprehensive approaches that:

1. **Collect and analyze sex and age disaggregated data:** Only 41% of humanitarian needs assessments currently include gender analysis, limiting understanding of differential needs and impacts.
2. **Ensure meaningful participation:** Women's participation in camp management committees remains below 40% globally, despite evidence that inclusive governance improves outcomes for all displaced persons.
3. **Address specific protection concerns:** Gender-based violence prevention and response services must be prioritized from the onset of displacement, with dedicated resources and specialized expertise.
4. **Support economic empowerment:** Programs that address barriers to women's economic participation, including childcare, skills training, and access to financial services, have demonstrated positive impacts for entire households.
5. **Engage men and boys:** Programs that work with men and boys to address harmful gender norms and promote positive masculinities have shown promise in reducing gender-based violence and improving outcomes for all.

The IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM) provides a valuable tool for assessing the extent to which humanitarian programming addresses gender considerations, but

implementation remains inconsistent. Only 35% of humanitarian response plans currently achieve the highest rating for gender-responsiveness, highlighting significant room for improvement.

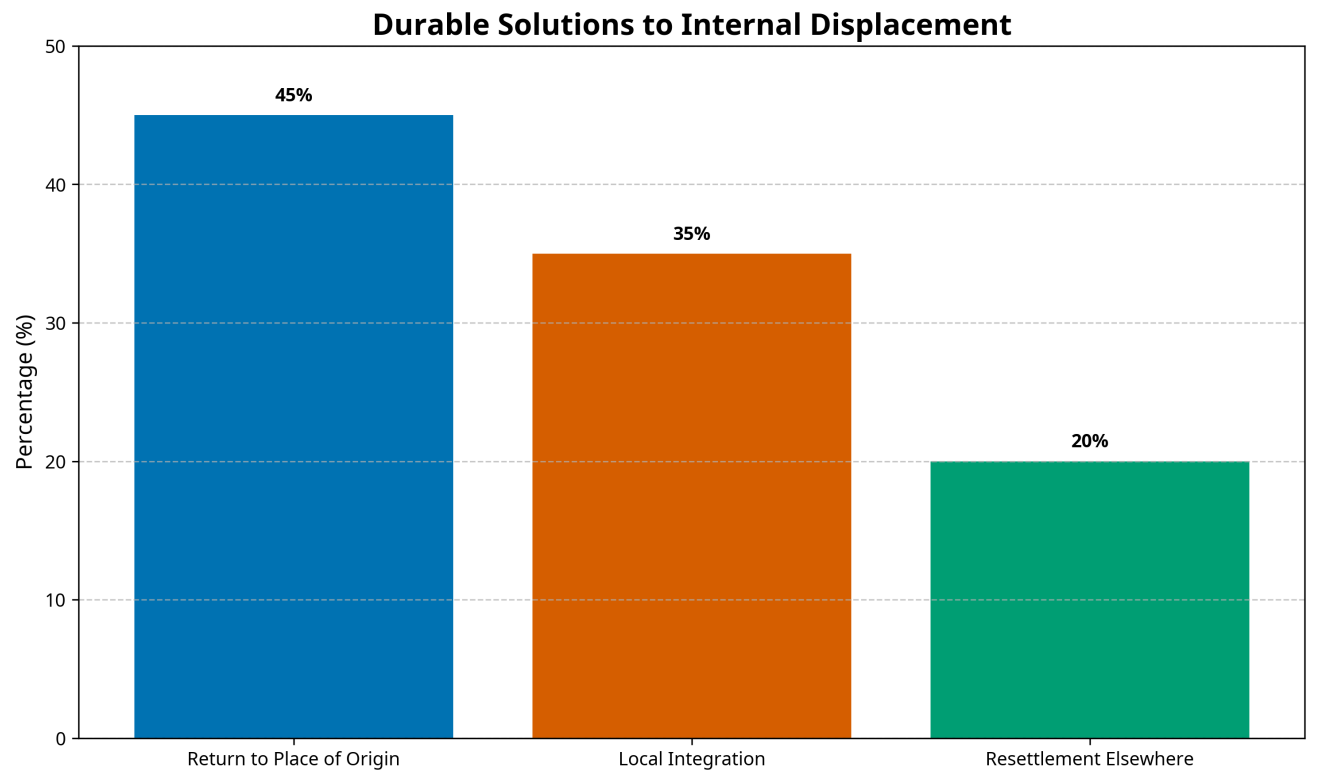
Effective gender-responsive approaches recognize both vulnerabilities and capacities, avoiding portraying women solely as victims while acknowledging the specific risks they face. Similarly, approaches must recognize men's specific needs while also engaging them as partners in promoting gender equality.

## 6. Durable Solutions Framework and Implementation

Achieving durable solutions to internal displacement remains one of the most significant challenges in humanitarian and development practice. The IASC Framework for Durable Solutions, endorsed in 2010, defines a durable solution as one where IDPs "no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement."

### Types of Durable Solutions

As illustrated in Figure 5, there are three main pathways to durable solutions, each with varying levels of implementation success globally.



- 1. Return to place of origin (45%):** This involves IDPs returning to their original homes or places of habitual residence. While often presented as the preferred

solution, return is not always possible or desirable due to ongoing insecurity, destroyed infrastructure, or changed socio-economic conditions.

2. **Local integration (35%):** This involves IDPs permanently settling in the areas where they sought refuge. Successful local integration requires legal, economic, and social dimensions, including access to documentation, livelihoods, services, and acceptance by host communities.
3. **Resettlement elsewhere (20%):** This involves IDPs settling in another part of the country, neither their place of origin nor their place of displacement. This may be appropriate when return is not possible and local integration faces significant barriers.

The relative success rates of these pathways vary significantly across contexts. In some situations, such as post-disaster displacement in the Philippines, return rates exceed 80%, while in protracted conflict situations like Syria or Somalia, sustainable returns may be below 10%.

## Key Elements of Durable Solutions

Achieving durable solutions requires addressing eight criteria outlined in the IASC Framework:

1. **Safety and security:** Long-term safety and security, including protection from armed conflict, human rights abuses, and natural disasters.
2. **Adequate standard of living:** Access to adequate food, water, housing, healthcare, and basic education.
3. **Access to livelihoods:** Employment and livelihood opportunities that allow IDPs to meet their socio-economic needs.
4. **Housing, land, and property restitution:** Resolution of housing, land, and property issues, including compensation for loss where restitution is not possible.
5. **Documentation:** Access to personal and other documentation necessary for legal identity, property ownership, and access to services.
6. **Family reunification:** Reunification with family members separated during displacement.
7. **Participation in public affairs:** Ability to participate in public affairs without discrimination.

8. **Access to effective remedies and justice:** Access to mechanisms for resolving displacement-related rights violations.

Progress across these criteria is uneven, with physical security and basic services often prioritized over legal, economic, and social dimensions. According to the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, only 21% of IDP situations globally show significant progress across all eight criteria.

## Implementation Challenges and Innovations

Several key challenges hinder the implementation of durable solutions:

1. **Political will:** National governments may lack incentives to prioritize durable solutions, particularly in contexts where displacement has political dimensions.
2. **Coordination gaps:** Humanitarian-development-peace divides often impede comprehensive approaches to durable solutions.
3. **Funding shortfalls:** Durable solutions require sustained investment beyond short-term humanitarian funding cycles.
4. **Data limitations:** Inadequate monitoring of progress toward durable solutions hampers evidence-based programming.
5. **Exclusion of IDPs:** Limited participation of displaced persons in planning and implementing solutions undermines sustainability.

Despite these challenges, several promising innovations have emerged:

- **Solutions-oriented programming:** The Somalia Durable Solutions Initiative and the Colombia Transitional Solutions Initiative demonstrate the value of comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approaches.
- **Area-based approaches:** Programs targeting specific geographic areas affected by displacement, rather than status-based targeting, have shown promise in promoting social cohesion and sustainable development.
- **Innovative financing:** The World Bank's Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR) and the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda Financing Platform represent new approaches to funding durable solutions.
- **Improved monitoring:** The Interagency Durable Solutions Indicator Library and the ReDSS Solutions Framework provide standardized tools for measuring progress toward durable solutions.



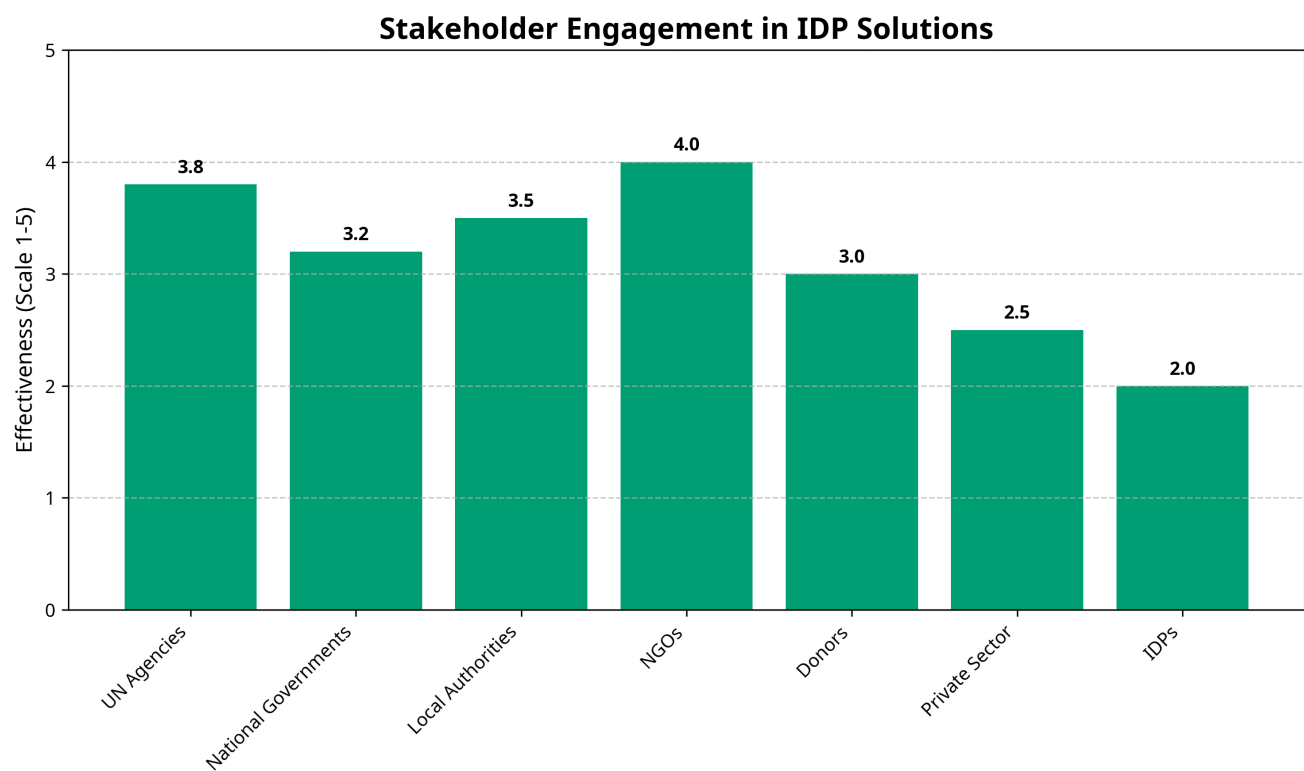
The effectiveness of these approaches depends on context-specific factors, including the nature and duration of displacement, political dynamics, resource availability, and the capacities of affected communities. Successful implementation requires both technical expertise and political engagement, with a focus on creating enabling conditions for IDPs to rebuild their lives with dignity and self-reliance.

## 7. Coordination Mechanisms and Multi-Stakeholder Approaches

Effective coordination among diverse stakeholders is essential for addressing the complex challenges of internal displacement. The multifaceted nature of displacement—spanning humanitarian, development, peace, and human rights dimensions—necessitates coherent approaches that leverage the comparative advantages of different actors.

### Stakeholder Engagement and Effectiveness

As illustrated in Figure 7, various stakeholders play critical roles in addressing internal displacement, with varying levels of effectiveness.



The data reveals several key insights:

- NGOs demonstrate the highest effectiveness rating (4.0)**, reflecting their operational flexibility, proximity to affected populations, and specialized expertise.

However, their impact is often limited by resource constraints and geographic coverage.

2. **UN agencies (3.8) and local authorities (3.5)** show relatively strong performance, though coordination between them remains challenging. UN agencies bring technical expertise and normative frameworks, while local authorities provide essential local knowledge and legitimacy.
3. **National governments (3.2) and donors (3.0)** occupy the middle range, with significant variation across contexts. Government leadership is essential for sustainable solutions but may be constrained by capacity limitations or political considerations.
4. **Private sector engagement (2.5) remains limited**, despite potential contributions to livelihoods, housing, and service delivery. Innovative public-private partnerships show promise but require appropriate incentives and safeguards.
5. **IDP participation (2.0) scores lowest**, highlighting a critical gap in current coordination mechanisms. Despite rhetorical commitments to accountability to affected populations, meaningful IDP engagement in decision-making remains inadequate.

## Global Coordination Frameworks

Several global frameworks guide coordination on internal displacement:

1. **Cluster Approach:** Established in 2005 as part of humanitarian reform, the cluster system assigns clear leadership and accountability for different sectors of humanitarian response. The Global Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR, includes a dedicated Task Team on Law and Policy on Internal Displacement.
2. **UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement:** Launched in 2023, this agenda promotes a "whole-of-UN" approach to internal displacement, emphasizing solutions, prevention, and improved data. It establishes a UN Coordinator on Solutions to Internal Displacement to enhance system-wide coherence.
3. **UN System-wide Approach to Internal Displacement:** Adopted by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination in January 2025, this framework outlines roles and responsibilities across the UN system, promoting coherence and cross-pillar integration.

4. **GP20 Plan of Action:** Marking the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, this multi-stakeholder initiative promotes national law and policy development, data collection, and participation of displaced communities.

These frameworks have improved predictability and accountability in responses to internal displacement, but implementation gaps persist, particularly in bridging humanitarian and development approaches.

## Country-Level Coordination Mechanisms

At the country level, several coordination models have demonstrated effectiveness:

1. **Government-led mechanisms:** Colombia's Victims' Unit and Ethiopia's Durable Solutions Initiative exemplify strong national ownership, though with varying degrees of inclusivity and effectiveness.
2. **Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs):** In contexts with limited government capacity or will, HCTs often lead coordination on internal displacement, though typically with a focus on immediate needs rather than durable solutions.
3. **Solutions Working Groups:** Dedicated coordination bodies focusing specifically on durable solutions have been established in Somalia, Iraq, and other contexts, bringing together humanitarian, development, peace, and government actors.
4. **Resident Coordinator Offices:** UN Resident Coordinators increasingly play a central role in coordinating responses to internal displacement, particularly in transitional contexts moving from humanitarian to development approaches.

The effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on several factors:

- **Clear leadership and accountability:** Defined roles and responsibilities with appropriate authority.
- **Inclusive participation:** Meaningful engagement of displaced communities and local civil society.
- **Adequate resources:** Dedicated capacity for coordination functions.
- **Information management:** Shared data systems and analysis to inform decision-making.
- **Strategic alignment:** Coherence between humanitarian, development, and peace initiatives.

## Financing Coordination

Sustainable coordination requires dedicated financing mechanisms. Several innovative approaches have emerged:

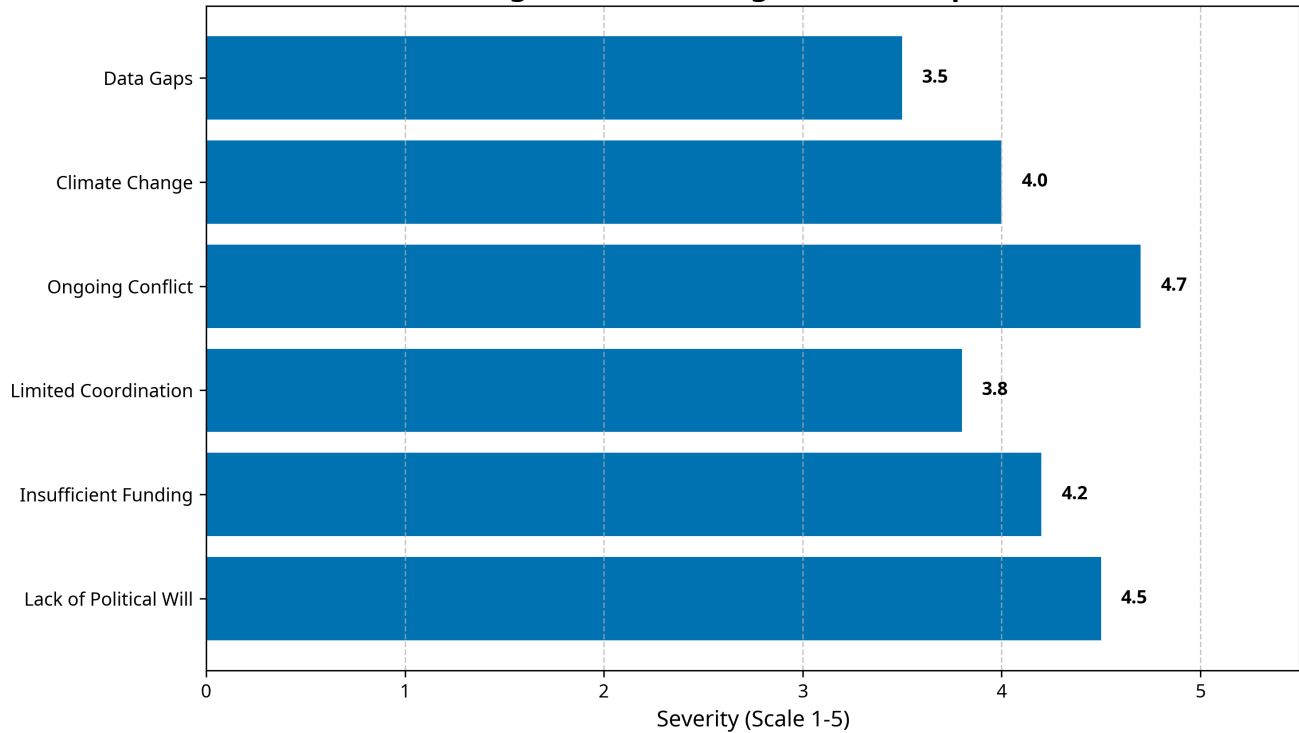
1. **Multi-Partner Trust Funds:** The Somalia Durable Solutions Fund and the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda Financing Platform provide pooled funding for coordinated solutions programming.
2. **Development financing:** The World Bank's IDA Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR) and regional development banks increasingly support displacement-affected communities.
3. **Humanitarian-development nexus funding:** Donors like the EU, Denmark, and Germany have established flexible funding instruments that span traditional humanitarian-development divides.
4. **National financing:** Government budget allocations for displacement response and solutions, as in Colombia and Iraq, demonstrate national ownership and sustainability.

Despite these innovations, coordination remains underfunded, with dedicated capacity often dependent on short-term project funding. Sustainable coordination requires predictable, multi-year financing that incentivizes collaboration across institutional boundaries.

## 8. Challenges in Addressing Internal Displacement

Despite significant efforts to address internal displacement, numerous challenges persist, hampering effective responses and durable solutions. As illustrated in Figure 6, these challenges vary in severity and require differentiated approaches.

### Challenges in Addressing Internal Displacement



## Ongoing Conflict and Insecurity

With a severity rating of 4.7 out of 5, ongoing conflict represents the most significant barrier to addressing internal displacement. Persistent violence not only generates new displacement but also prevents return and sustainable solutions for those already displaced. In contexts such as Syria, Yemen, and South Sudan, cyclical violence has resulted in multiple displacements for many individuals, compounding vulnerabilities and eroding coping mechanisms.

Peace processes and political settlements are prerequisites for sustainable solutions in many contexts, yet they often exclude displacement considerations. Only 18% of peace agreements since 2000 include specific provisions on displacement, according to the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. This highlights the need for greater integration of displacement issues in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

## Lack of Political Will

Rated at 4.5 in severity, insufficient political will at national and international levels undermines effective responses to internal displacement. National governments may have limited incentives to acknowledge or address displacement, particularly when it results from their own actions or policies. In some cases, displacement may be deliberately used as a political or military strategy.

International attention to internal displacement often fluctuates based on geopolitical interests, media coverage, and competing crises. The absence of a dedicated global

convention on internal displacement (unlike for refugees) contributes to inconsistent political engagement and accountability.

Strengthening political will requires both incentives and accountability mechanisms. Regional frameworks such as the Kampala Convention in Africa demonstrate how binding legal instruments can enhance political commitment, while development financing can create positive incentives for government engagement.

## Insufficient Funding

With a severity rating of 4.2, funding shortfalls significantly constrain responses to internal displacement. Humanitarian appeals for displacement crises are consistently underfunded, with an average funding gap of 45% according to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service. Moreover, funding is often short-term and siloed, hampering sustainable approaches.

The financial requirements for addressing internal displacement extend far beyond humanitarian assistance, encompassing infrastructure reconstruction, service provision, livelihood support, and governance strengthening. The World Bank estimates that resolving protracted displacement situations requires investment of \$300-500 per displaced person annually over a 5-10 year period, far exceeding current spending levels.

Innovative financing mechanisms, including development loans, private sector investment, and blended finance, show promise in addressing these gaps, but require significant scaling to meet global needs.

## Limited Coordination

Coordination challenges (rated 3.8 in severity) manifest at multiple levels:

- **Institutional divides:** Humanitarian, development, peace, and human rights actors often operate with different timeframes, priorities, and approaches.
- **Sectoral silos:** Protection, shelter, health, education, and livelihoods interventions may lack coherence and integration.
- **National-local disconnects:** Central government policies may not translate to local implementation, while local initiatives may lack national support and sustainability.
- **International-national tensions:** International actors may bypass or undermine national and local systems, while national actors may restrict international access and operations.

These coordination challenges result in duplications, gaps, and inefficiencies in displacement responses. They also contribute to the humanitarian-development divide, with short-term assistance often disconnected from longer-term solutions.

## Climate Change

Climate change (rated 4.0 in severity) is both driving new displacement and complicating solutions for existing IDPs. Increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, combined with slow-onset changes such as desertification and sea-level rise, are forcing millions from their homes annually.

Climate-induced displacement presents particular challenges for durable solutions, as affected areas may become permanently uninhabitable. Traditional approaches focused on return may not be viable, necessitating planned relocation and alternative settlement options.

The intersection of climate change with conflict and fragility creates compound risks, with climate impacts exacerbating resource competition and social tensions in already vulnerable contexts. This requires integrated approaches that address both immediate displacement needs and underlying environmental and governance challenges.

## Data Gaps

With a severity rating of 3.5, data limitations hamper effective responses to internal displacement. Key gaps include:

- **Incomplete coverage:** Many displacement situations remain undocumented or under-reported, particularly in urban and non-camp settings.
- **Limited disaggregation:** Insufficient breakdown by sex, age, disability, and other characteristics obscures differential needs and vulnerabilities.
- **Methodological inconsistencies:** Varying definitions and data collection approaches complicate comparisons across contexts and over time.
- **Solutions monitoring:** Limited tracking of progress toward durable solutions beyond physical return or relocation.
- **Predictive analytics:** Underdeveloped early warning systems and forecasting for displacement risk.

These data challenges undermine evidence-based programming, resource allocation, and accountability. They also contribute to the invisibility of certain displaced populations, particularly those outside formal camp settings or in areas with limited humanitarian access.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires comprehensive approaches that span humanitarian, development, peace, and human rights domains. It necessitates both technical solutions and political engagement, with a focus on creating enabling conditions for displaced persons to rebuild their lives with dignity and self-reliance.

## 9. Case Studies of Successful Interventions

While internal displacement presents significant challenges, several interventions have demonstrated promising results in addressing specific aspects of displacement and working toward durable solutions. These case studies highlight effective approaches across different contexts and thematic areas.

### Colombia: Comprehensive Victim Assistance and Reparations

Colombia's Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448 of 2011) established one of the world's most comprehensive frameworks for addressing internal displacement. Key elements include:

- **Legal recognition:** Formal acknowledgment of IDPs as victims with specific rights and entitlements.
- **Institutional architecture:** Creation of dedicated institutions, including the Victims' Unit and Land Restitution Unit.
- **Reparations program:** Comprehensive approach including compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.
- **Land restitution:** Judicial and administrative processes to restore land rights to displaced persons.
- **Participatory mechanisms:** Victims' roundtables at municipal, departmental, and national levels.

**Results:** By 2024, over 2 million IDPs had received individual reparations, and approximately 500,000 hectares of land had been restituted. The program has faced implementation challenges, particularly in areas with ongoing violence, but represents a significant advance in recognizing and addressing the rights of displaced persons.

**Key lessons:** Comprehensive legal frameworks can provide a foundation for sustainable solutions, but must be accompanied by adequate resources, political commitment, and security improvements to achieve their potential.



## Somalia: Durable Solutions Initiative

Somalia's protracted displacement crisis, with over 3 million IDPs, has been addressed through the Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI), launched in 2016. Key features include:

- **Government leadership:** Federal Government of Somalia leads the process, supported by international partners.
- **Collective outcomes:** Shared objectives across humanitarian, development, and peace actors.
- **Area-based approaches:** Focus on specific geographic areas with high displacement concentrations.
- **Integrated programming:** Combining physical infrastructure, service provision, livelihood support, and governance strengthening.
- **Innovative financing:** Establishment of a dedicated Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

**Results:** By 2024, the initiative had supported sustainable solutions for approximately 250,000 IDPs, with significant improvements in housing security, service access, and livelihood opportunities in targeted areas.

**Key lessons:** Effective solutions require bridging humanitarian-development divides, with strong government ownership and flexible, multi-year financing. Area-based approaches can promote social cohesion and benefit both displaced and host communities.

## Philippines: Disaster Displacement Risk Reduction

The Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, has developed innovative approaches to preventing and addressing disaster-induced displacement:

- **Legal framework:** The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2010) and Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act (2016) provide comprehensive frameworks.
- **Preventive evacuation:** Well-established protocols for pre-emptive evacuation before disasters strike.
- **Build Back Better:** Reconstruction approaches that reduce future displacement risk.
- **Community-based monitoring:** Local tracking of displacement and return processes.
- **Gender-responsive approaches:** Specific provisions for women's protection and participation.

**Results:** Despite facing 20-25 typhoons annually, the Philippines has reduced disaster mortality by 93% since 1990 and significantly shortened displacement durations through effective preparedness and response systems.

**Key lessons:** Investing in disaster risk reduction and preparedness yields significant returns in reduced displacement impacts. Local capacity and community engagement are essential for effective implementation.

## **Iraq: Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Rights**

Iraq's displacement crisis, with 1.2 million IDPs remaining from the conflict with ISIS, has highlighted the centrality of housing, land, and property issues to durable solutions:

- **Legal assistance:** Support for documentation, property claims, and compensation applications.
- **Alternative dispute resolution:** Community-based mechanisms to resolve property disputes.
- **Reconstruction support:** Targeted assistance for housing rehabilitation in areas of return.
- **Security of tenure:** Initiatives to formalize housing arrangements for IDPs in urban areas.
- **Women's HLP rights:** Specific focus on overcoming barriers faced by female-headed households.

**Results:** By 2024, legal assistance programs had supported over 100,000 households in resolving property issues, contributing to the sustainable return of approximately 4.9 million formerly displaced persons.

**Key lessons:** HLP issues are central to durable solutions and require both technical and political approaches. Legal assistance must be complemented by physical reconstruction and security improvements to enable sustainable returns.

## **Uganda: Gender-Responsive Displacement Response**

Uganda's approach to internal displacement in the northern region has incorporated strong gender dimensions:

- **Women's leadership:** Quotas for women's participation in camp management and community governance.
- **Gender-based violence prevention:** Comprehensive programs combining awareness, response services, and male engagement.
- **Economic empowerment:** Women-focused livelihood initiatives, including Village Savings and Loan Associations.

- **Land rights:** Support for women's access to land, particularly for female-headed households.
- **Gender-responsive budgeting:** Allocation of specific resources for women's priorities.

**Results:** Evaluations indicate significant improvements in women's economic status, decision-making power, and protection from violence, contributing to more sustainable solutions for all displaced persons.

**Key lessons:** Gender-responsive approaches benefit entire communities and enhance the sustainability of solutions. Women's meaningful participation requires both targeted support and addressing structural barriers.

These case studies demonstrate that effective responses to internal displacement are possible with appropriate legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, resources, and political commitment. While no single approach can be universally applied, these examples provide valuable lessons that can be adapted to different contexts, contributing to more effective and sustainable solutions globally.

## 10. Recommendations and Way Forward

Based on the analysis presented in this study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen responses to internal displacement, with a particular focus on durable solutions, coordination mechanisms, and gender-responsive approaches.

### For National Governments

1. **Develop comprehensive legal and policy frameworks** on internal displacement, aligned with the Guiding Principles and relevant regional instruments. These should clearly define institutional responsibilities, establish coordination mechanisms, and allocate adequate resources.
2. **Integrate displacement considerations into national development plans** and sector strategies, ensuring that IDPs are included in regular service provision and development initiatives rather than parallel humanitarian systems.
3. **Strengthen data collection and analysis** on internal displacement, including disaggregation by sex, age, and other relevant characteristics. National statistical offices should be capacitated to include IDPs in regular population data.
4. **Establish dedicated coordination mechanisms** that bring together relevant ministries, local authorities, international partners, civil society, and

representatives of displaced communities. These should span humanitarian, development, and peace dimensions.

5. **Develop gender-responsive policies and programs** that address the specific needs and capacities of displaced women, men, girls, and boys. This includes targeted initiatives to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and support women's economic empowerment.

## For International Organizations

1. **Strengthen system-wide coherence** in addressing internal displacement, implementing the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda and the UN System-wide Approach. This includes clarifying roles and responsibilities and establishing joint planning and programming mechanisms.
2. **Invest in area-based approaches** that benefit both displaced and host communities, focusing on specific geographic areas rather than status-based targeting. This can promote social cohesion and sustainable development.
3. **Develop innovative financing mechanisms** that bridge humanitarian-development divides and provide predictable, multi-year funding for durable solutions. This includes expanding the role of development finance and exploring private sector partnerships.
4. **Strengthen accountability to affected populations**, ensuring meaningful participation of displaced persons in all phases of program design, implementation, and evaluation. This requires dedicated resources, capacity building, and adaptation of existing participation mechanisms.
5. **Enhance technical support for gender-responsive programming**, including deployment of gender advisors, development of practical guidance, and systematic use of the Gender with Age Marker (GAM) to assess and improve gender-responsiveness.

## For Donors

1. **Provide flexible, multi-year funding** that enables comprehensive approaches to internal displacement, spanning emergency response, recovery, and long-term solutions. This includes reducing earmarking and allowing adaptive programming.
2. **Support coordination mechanisms** with dedicated resources, recognizing that effective coordination requires specific capacity and cannot be treated as an add-on to existing responsibilities.

3. **Incentivize collaboration** across humanitarian, development, and peace actors through funding instruments that reward joint analysis, planning, and programming. This includes supporting collective outcomes approaches.
4. **Invest in local capacity** of national institutions, civil society organizations, and displaced communities themselves, shifting from direct implementation to enabling and supporting local actors.
5. **Require gender analysis and response** in all funded interventions, ensuring that programs address the specific needs and capacities of different gender and age groups. This includes dedicated funding for women-led organizations.

## For Civil Society and Research Institutions

1. **Strengthen advocacy** on internal displacement at national and international levels, highlighting protection concerns and promoting rights-based approaches. This includes supporting IDP self-advocacy and amplifying their voices.
2. **Conduct applied research** on effective approaches to internal displacement, with a focus on durable solutions, coordination mechanisms, and gender dimensions. This should include longitudinal studies tracking outcomes over time.
3. **Develop innovative methodologies** for data collection in challenging contexts, including remote monitoring, community-based approaches, and use of new technologies. This can help address data gaps in areas with limited access.
4. **Build capacity** of local civil society organizations and IDP associations, strengthening their ability to participate effectively in coordination mechanisms and influence policy and programming.
5. **Document and disseminate good practices** and lessons learned, contributing to a global evidence base on effective responses to internal displacement. This includes highlighting gender-transformative approaches.

## Priority Actions for Immediate Implementation

While comprehensive approaches are necessary, several priority actions can yield significant immediate benefits:

1. **Establish or strengthen national coordination mechanisms** for internal displacement, ensuring appropriate leadership, clear terms of reference, and dedicated capacity.

2. **Conduct joint analyses** of displacement situations, bringing together humanitarian, development, peace, and government perspectives to develop shared understanding and priorities.
3. **Develop solutions strategies** for specific displacement situations, with clear roles, responsibilities, and resource requirements for different stakeholders.
4. **Implement gender-responsive programming** in priority sectors, including protection, livelihoods, and governance, with specific attention to women's participation and leadership.
5. **Strengthen monitoring frameworks** for durable solutions, using standardized indicators to track progress and inform adaptive programming.

These recommendations provide a framework for more effective and sustainable responses to internal displacement. While context-specific adaptation is essential, the core principles of government leadership, system-wide coherence, gender-responsiveness, and meaningful participation of displaced persons are universally applicable.

## 11. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of internal displacement globally, with a particular focus on durable solutions, coordination mechanisms, and gender-responsive approaches. The analysis reveals both significant challenges and promising opportunities for more effective responses to one of the world's most pressing humanitarian and development issues.

The scale and complexity of internal displacement continue to grow, with 83.4 million people displaced worldwide as of 2024—a 64% increase since 2018. This alarming trend reflects both new displacements driven by conflict, violence, disasters, and climate change, and the protracted nature of many displacement situations, with millions of IDPs unable to find durable solutions for years or even decades.

The regional distribution of internal displacement highlights the disproportionate burden borne by certain regions, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and the Americas. This uneven distribution reflects different conflict dynamics, governance challenges, and vulnerability to natural disasters, necessitating context-specific approaches while drawing on global best practices.

Gender dimensions of displacement require particular attention, with women and men, girls and boys facing different risks, challenges, and opportunities. Gender-responsive approaches that address specific needs while recognizing and building on capacities are

essential for effective and inclusive responses. However, significant gaps remain in both gender-disaggregated data and gender-responsive programming, limiting the effectiveness of current interventions.

Durable solutions—whether through return to places of origin, local integration, or settlement elsewhere—remain elusive for millions of IDPs. Achieving such solutions requires addressing not only physical security and basic needs but also legal, economic, social, and political dimensions. This necessitates bridging humanitarian-development divides and ensuring coherent approaches across different sectors and stakeholders.

Coordination mechanisms at global, national, and local levels have evolved significantly in recent years, with promising innovations such as the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and country-level solutions initiatives. However, challenges persist in ensuring effective coordination across institutional boundaries, adequate resources for coordination functions, and meaningful participation of displaced communities.

Despite these challenges, the case studies presented in this analysis demonstrate that effective responses to internal displacement are possible with appropriate legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, resources, and political commitment. From Colombia's comprehensive reparations program to Somalia's Durable Solutions Initiative, these examples provide valuable lessons that can be adapted to different contexts.

Looking forward, addressing internal displacement effectively will require:

1. **Strengthened national ownership and capacity**, with governments taking the lead in developing and implementing comprehensive approaches to internal displacement.
2. **Enhanced system-wide coherence** among humanitarian, development, peace, and human rights actors, with clear roles and responsibilities and joint planning and programming.
3. **Innovative financing mechanisms** that provide predictable, multi-year funding for durable solutions, bridging humanitarian-development divides and leveraging both public and private resources.
4. **Meaningful participation of displaced communities** in all aspects of response and solutions, recognizing their agency and expertise while addressing specific vulnerabilities.

5. **Gender-responsive approaches** that address the different needs and capacities of women, men, girls, and boys, while working to transform harmful gender norms and promote equality.
6. **Improved data and evidence** to inform policy and programming, including disaggregated data, longitudinal studies, and systematic monitoring of progress toward durable solutions.

Internal displacement represents one of the most significant humanitarian and development challenges of our time, affecting millions of lives and undermining progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing this challenge effectively requires not only technical solutions but also political will, adequate resources, and a fundamental commitment to the rights and dignity of displaced persons.

By strengthening coordination mechanisms, implementing gender-responsive approaches, and working toward comprehensive durable solutions, we can make significant progress in reducing internal displacement and supporting displaced persons to rebuild their lives with dignity and self-reliance. This study provides a foundation for such efforts, offering evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for more effective and sustainable responses.

## 12. References

1. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2024). Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2024.
2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). Mid-Year Trends 2024.
3. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2023). Gender Dynamics in Internal Displacement.
4. United Nations. (2023). Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.
5. United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination. (2025). United Nations System-wide Approach to Internal Displacement.
6. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2010). Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons.
7. World Bank. (2023). Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts.



8. UN Women. (2024). Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action and Crisis Response.
9. Brookings Institution. (2011). Resolving Internal Displacement: Prospects for Local Integration.
10. Overseas Development Institute. (2022). Coordination in Crisis: The Practice of Coordination in Humanitarian Clusters.
11. African Union. (2009). Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).
12. Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS). (2023). Durable Solutions Indicator Library and Analysis Guide.
13. Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS). (2024). Solutions Framework: Local Integration Focus.
14. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2024). Global Humanitarian Overview.
15. International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2024). PROGRESS 2024: Informing Solutions to Internal Displacement.