

**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

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**UNHCR engagement with internally displaced
persons**

Summary

This paper provides a comprehensive update on recent developments in the engagement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons, encompassing advocacy, operational activities and humanitarian coordination and leadership. Furthermore, it highlights progress made by UNHCR in strengthening strategic partnerships and advancing its contributions to the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

I. Introduction

1. By the end of 2025, the number of people reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as internally displaced due to conflict and violence had fallen to 64.1 million, marking a 7 per cent decrease from the 73.5 million reported at the end of 2024. Globally, more than two-thirds of people forced to flee did so internally, while one third fled beyond the borders of their home country.

2. UNHCR facilitated the provision of protection, assistance and solutions to internally displaced persons in almost 30 countries across all regions in line with successive United Nations General Assembly resolutions and the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. UNHCR also contributed to the coordination of humanitarian responses, serving as the lead agency for the Protection Cluster, Shelter Cluster and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Clusters throughout 2025.

II. Supporting protection in situations of internal displacement

3. The right to be protected against arbitrary displacement is enshrined in the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and in the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (informally known as the Kampala Convention), reflecting both international humanitarian and human rights law.

4. In 2025, UNHCR maintained strong advocacy efforts on behalf of internally displaced persons, despite facing a challenging funding environment and escalating humanitarian crises. The Office engaged with national authorities, host communities, internally displaced persons and other stakeholders to promote the protection of rights and to support the voices of displaced populations being heard and reflected in decision-making processes. The Office underscored the importance of meaningful, effective and inclusive participation of internally displaced persons in shaping solutions that affect their lives, while reiterating that the primary responsibility for their protection and assistance rested with the States.

5. The engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement is guided by the UNHCR policy on Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement and its Focus Area Strategic Plan for Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2024-2030, which provide a roadmap for predictable and prioritized action.

6. In 2025, UNHCR supported at least 10 countries in strengthening their legal, policy and institutional frameworks on internal displacement in line with international standards, including Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria and Ukraine. By May 2026, the UNHCR dashboard on internally displaced persons law and policy recorded 48 laws on internal displacement across 18 countries. Notable developments included the adoption by the Free and Sovereign State of Oaxaca in Mexico of the first law on internal displacement in the Americas addressing all causes of displacement, including disasters and the adverse effects of climate change. Colombia adopted its first national policy on durable solutions for victims of forced displacement, (known by its acronym, CONPES), which introduces an area-based and coordinated approach with an indicative budget of approximately \$2.5 billion. In Nigeria, presidential assent was granted in November 2025 to legislation incorporating the Kampala Convention into national law, while Benue State adopted its durable solutions action plan. Across these processes, UNHCR supported legislative development, ensured the participation of displaced communities and monitored implementation to promote effective protection outcomes.

7. UNHCR continued to use protection analysis as a central advocacy tool to ensure that protection considerations were systematically integrated across all aspects of responses. In 2025, the UNHCR-led Global Protection Cluster prepared 25 protection analysis updates, which were shared with States, United Nations Resident Coordinators, United Nations country teams and internally displaced persons to inform planning, coordination and decision-making. In parallel, UNHCR advocated for the inclusion of internally displaced persons in national statistical systems, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala and Ukraine. This work was carried out in close coordination with the Expert

Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons and Statelessness Statistics, under the mandate of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

8. UNHCR support contributed to concrete protection outcomes in multiple contexts. In Ukraine, it expanded access for internally displaced persons to services, housing and documentation, benefiting over 89,000 people. In Ethiopia, it enabled the issuance of 50,000 national identification cards to internally displaced persons. In Yemen, more than 12,000 internally displaced persons and returnees received legal assistance to access documentation and housing, land and property rights. In the Syrian Arab Republic, community-based interventions benefited over 1.2 million people, strengthening local capacity in psychosocial support, gender-based violence prevention and response, child protection, legal aid and education support. These efforts combined legal assistance, service provision and community-based protection to address both immediate and longer-term risks.

9. Funding reductions have led to the scaling back or discontinuation of critical protection and solutions-oriented activities for internally displaced persons in many countries, including community-based programmes, responses to gender-based violence, legal aid and mobile outreach. As a result, displaced people face heightened risks of violence, exploitation and other protection concerns, undermining progress achieved through strengthened legal frameworks and field-level protection efforts.

III. Strengthening partnerships

10. UNHCR and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons co-led the Protection Expert Group for Internally Displaced Persons, which provided technical support to government and United Nations stakeholders in addressing protection challenges through peer-to-peer exchanges. In collaboration with the Protection Expert Group for Internally Displaced Persons, in September 2025 UNHCR convened participants from 13 countries who had attended the 2024 Cross-Regional Forum on Implementing Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement in Senegal, to take stock of progress on legal and policy frameworks one year later. In October 2025, UNHCR and the Protection Expert Group for Internally Displaced Persons, with the support of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, organized another Cross-Regional Forum on Implementing Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement in San Remo, Italy. Officials from nine countries, along with two internally displaced leaders, discussed challenges in implementing internal displacement laws and policies, with a focus on multi-level governance and sub-national responses.

11. In support of locally informed solutions, UNHCR provides secretariat support to the Global Internally Displaced Persons Advisory Group, a consultative body composed of 12 internally displaced leaders. The Group advises United Nations agencies and other stakeholders on efforts to prevent displacement, protect affected populations, and advance solutions for internally displaced persons. In 2025, Group members participated in the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review, the Cross-Regional Forum on the Implementation of Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement, the Global Protection Forum and the commemoration of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. In late 2025, UNHCR organized elections for the Group's second term. The first term concluded in early 2026, after which the newly elected members commenced their mandate.

IV. Ensuring effective humanitarian coordination

12. UNHCR continues to be actively engaged with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on matters relating to humanitarian coordination, including the implementation phase of the Humanitarian Reset, the reform process led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to streamline the humanitarian architecture. This includes the cluster simplification, adapting coordination to country contexts, and enhancing localization.

13. Following the Inter-Agency Standing Committee principals' decision on cluster simplification in June 2025, UNHCR has worked together with the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Population Fund on

the consolidation of the child protection, gender-based violence and mine action areas within the Protection Cluster, to reduce the burden on coordination and focus on programme delivery. The consolidation has been completed at the global level and is currently being implemented at the country level, with completion expected by mid-2026.

14 The Global Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR, coordinates the protection response in humanitarian settings. In 2025, UNHCR led 28 out of 32 Protection Clusters and other cluster-like coordination mechanisms, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and the Sudan. A number of Protection Cluster operations have started (Cameroon, Colombia, Nigeria) or have finalized transition to development or government-led coordination structures in 2025 (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Zimbabwe), in line with global and country level decisions on coordination needs and requirements.

15. The Global Protection Cluster responded to 577 requests for support from country operations worldwide, including on issues such as more selective prioritization, cluster transition or deactivation, cluster architecture and the increased use of area-based coordination. The Global Protection Cluster conducted 10 missions to strengthen coordination mechanisms and operational protection strategies. The cluster also organized the annual virtual Global Protection Forum, which brought together participants from 113 countries and focused on the protection space within the current context of humanitarian prioritization and funding restrictions. In parallel, the cluster conducted targeted public and private advocacy to promote protection and solutions in humanitarian settings, which included protection analyses, advocacy notes, letters, statements, submissions, and direct engagement with donors, members of the United Nations Security Council, the Human Rights Council and other key stakeholders.

16. UNHCR co-led the Global Shelter Cluster with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies throughout 2025. The cluster supported shelter coordination and the delivery of shelter and non-food item assistance in 37 countries. In its global coordination role, the cluster promoted cash and market-based assistance, settlement approaches and performance monitoring, while providing technical and remote support to country clusters.

17. UNHCR also co-lead the Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster which coordinated multi-sectoral assistance for more than 15 million internally displaced and crises-affected people across 27 countries. Through a combination of site management and area-based approaches, UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and partners facilitated access to life-saving services, including shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, and protection. At the global level, the cluster promoted alternatives to camps, area-based responses, localization, and pathways toward durable solutions

18. As part of the cluster simplification, the Shelter Cluster, Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, and Housing, Land and Property areas of responsibility have now been merged into a single global Shelter, Land and Site Coordination Cluster, with International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and IOM as joint global cluster leads and providers of last resort. UNHCR remains a key actor within the Shelter, Land and Site Coordination Cluster and continues to lead or co-lead coordination at country level in contexts where it already holds leadership responsibilities or has a comparative advantage. UNHCR continues to provide strong technical leadership on protection-sensitive shelter and settlement planning, displacement analysis, and linkages with housing, land and property issues. UNHCR also plays a critical role in ensuring that the Shelter, Land and Site Coordination Cluster framework maintains the centrality of protection, accountability to affected people, prevention of gender-based violence, and localization.

V. Engaging with the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement

19. UNHCR continued to contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, which aims to support internally displaced persons in achieving durable solutions, prevent new displacement crises, and ensure effective protection and assistance for those displaced. Following the closure of

the Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement at the end of 2024, the United Nations system transitioned in 2025 to new global institutional arrangements to sustain progress under the Action Agenda and strengthen system-wide coherence.

20. The High Commissioner serves in the Solutions Champions Group, composed of principals from IOM, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UNHCR, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and the ex-officio United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, to support Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams in facilitating government-led solutions. The Group works to sustain global attention on solutions to internal displacement and reinforce coherence across the system. UNHCR participated in joint Assistant Secretary-General Solutions Champions missions to Colombia and Nigeria, aimed at highlighting strong United Nations coordination and government leadership on internal displacement, while identifying opportunities to unlock sub-national financing, strengthen institutional capacity, balance humanitarian needs with longer-term investments, and further institutionalize community participation.

21. UNHCR supports and participates in the Global Hub for the Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement. This engagement includes facilitating learning, linking country-level priorities with global policy, data and financing, as well as supporting the implementation of projects financed by the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund in countries such as the Central African Republic, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.

22. UNHCR remained an active member of the Global Solutions Working Group and a core member of the Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement. These platforms operate at both global and country levels to promote a coherent, system-wide response. UNHCR also participated in discussions of the United Nations Executive Committee and Deputies Committee in April 2026, which reviewed progress during the first year of implementation of the United Nations' institutional arrangements on internal displacement and identified priorities for the next phase of the Action Agenda.

23. To ensure coherence in the engagement of UNHCR on internal displacement, the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations and the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection provided strategic oversight of commitments related to both operational and protection dimensions of the response.

VI. Budget and expenditure

24. In 2025, the Executive Committee at its seventy-sixth session, adopted a budget of \$1,155 million for the engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement. This represents a 23 per cent decrease for 2026 compared to the 2025 final budget of \$1,509 million.

25. As of January 2026, 15 per cent of 2026 requirements were funded, taking into consideration the indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions.