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Human rights of internally displaced persons

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Paula Gaviria Betancur, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 78/205 and Human Rights Council resolution 59/12.

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Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Paula Gaviria Betancur

Summary

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Paula Gaviria Betancur, examines the increasing scale and complexity of internal displacement in urban areas, where an estimated 50 million internally displaced persons now reside. Urban settings may offer internally displaced persons greater safety, services and economic potential, but also expose them to risks like exploitation, discrimination, poor housing and insecurity. Unregulated urban expansion, inequality, a disrupted urban social fabric and unemployment, combined with inadequate land use planning and poor construction practices, can pose significant challenges to local authorities with regard to protecting urban populations, including internally displaced persons, placing them under heightened human rights risks. In the report, the Special Rapporteur urges recognition of (re)integration as a right equal to return, requiring access to housing, services, identity and full social and political participation. She emphasizes the need for coordinated, rights-based and multisectoral responses, rooted in equity and accountability. She highlights that the right to (re)integration must be realized through both tangible (e.g. access to services, housing and documentation) and intangible (e.g. well-being, identity and mental health) dimensions. She calls on Member States to move beyond temporary aid and to adopt structural, people-centred approaches that uphold the rights of internally displaced persons and support resilient and inclusive urban development.

I. Introduction

1. The twenty-first century has marked a historic demographic shift, with urban areas now home to over half of the global population. This trend is projected to continue, particularly in rapidly growing economies across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Rapid urbanization is reshaping demographic landscapes in profound and complex ways. Population growth, rural-to-urban migration, climate change and the displacement of communities due to conflict, disaster and socioeconomic pressures are driving the expansion of cities at an unprecedented pace. Although determining a precise global number for internally displaced persons in urban settings remains a challenge, estimates suggest that as much as 60 per cent of the total internally displaced persons population may live in urban areas.[1] In 2024, the number of internally displaced persons globally reached 83.4 million, the highest figure ever recorded, bringing estimates of urban internally displaced persons to approximately 50 million.

2. As cities evolve into the primary destination for internally displaced persons, the intersection of demographic change and urban growth presents both opportunities and critical challenges for ensuring the full realization of internally displaced persons' rights and enabling durable solutions grounded in international human rights law. Urban settings may offer internally displaced persons greater safety, services and economic potential, but also expose them to risks like exploitation, discrimination, poor housing and insecurity. Unregulated urban expansion, inequality, disrupted urban social fabric and unemployment, combined with inadequate land use planning and poor construction practices, can pose significant challenges to local authorities with regard to protecting urban populations, including internally displaced persons, placing them under heightened human rights risks.

3. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons highlights that (re)integration must be recognized as a right equal to return and realized through both tangible (e.g. access to services, housing and documentation) and intangible (e.g. well-being, identity and mental health) dimensions. In line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, sustainable (re)integration requires addressing all aspects of displacement, including safety, livelihoods, participation and restitution. Moreover, for solutions to be truly sustainable, less tangible – yet essential – elements of integration, such as well-being, rootedness, identity and mental health, must also be addressed.

4. In the report, the Special Rapporteur emphasizes often-overlooked elements of (re)integration, such as social cohesion, urban inequality, well-being and mental health. It identifies legal and protection gaps and outlines a rights-based road map for durable and inclusive solutions. Calling on States to move beyond short-term aid, it advocates structural reforms aligned with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Framework on Durable Solutions to ensure the rights of internally displaced persons, foster equity, build resilience and support sustainable urban development.[2]

[1] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024* (Geneva, 2025).

[2] Submissions from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

II. Integration and reintegration: definitions and context

5. There is no single and universally accepted legal definition of what constitutes the integration or reintegration of internally displaced persons. According to the Framework on Durable Solutions, a durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance or protection needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination as a result of their displacement. Although this provides a useful starting point for defining (re)integration, it does not fully capture the subjective elements that may inform individual perceptions as to whether displacement has truly ended.

6. Integration and reintegration of internally displaced persons in urban areas are distinct but interrelated processes, both critical to achieving durable solutions to displacement. In urban contexts, integration refers to displaced persons settling in a city and becoming part of its social, economic and civic fabric. This can occur when persons flee rural areas or smaller towns to larger cities or when urban residents are displaced within or between cities. Reintegration, on the other hand, refers to internally displaced persons physically returning to their urban places of origin to re-establish their lives. In the present report, the single term "(re)integration" is used, except where the distinction between integration and reintegration is substantively relevant.

7. As citizens and residents, internally displaced persons have the right to move freely within their country and to seek safety in urban areas, where they must be able to enjoy their rights without discrimination. Although the rights of internally displaced persons are universal, the pathways to realizing them may differ between those integrating into new urban settings and those reintegrating into their urban places of origin. For example, reintegrating internally displaced persons may reclaim the housing from which they fled in the city to which they returned, whereas integrating internally displaced persons may claim their housing left behind in another jurisdiction. Similarly, to gain access to services, reintegrating internally displaced persons may need to replace their personal documents upon their return, while integrating internally displaced persons may need to seek new documents that confirm their current address following displacement.

8. Integration and reintegration are also closely tied to the urban environment and local community. For integrating internally displaced persons, the city often represents a new and unfamiliar setting, requiring them to build relationships with host communities and navigate potential social exclusion. Urban residents may perceive newcomers as competitors for scarce resources, such as jobs and housing, leading to discrimination or stigma. Displacement from rural to urban areas can disrupt family structures, social support and cultural identities,[3] particularly for ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, peasants and other groups with special dependency on and attachment to their lands and traditions. These shifts can reshape how internally displaced persons relate to their new environment and redefine their sense of identity.

9. Reintegration, in contrast, may involve returning to a familiar yet transformed urban landscape. Returned internally displaced persons may face distrust from neighbours if they are perceived as better off, as receiving more assistance or as having abandoned their community. They may also find their neighbourhoods physically altered, with services overstretched and infrastructure damaged. Reintegration is therefore not simply a reversal of displacement; it is a dynamic

[3] M. Tankink and others, *Culture, context and mental health and psychosocial well-being of refugees and internally displaced persons from South Sudan* (Geneva, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2023).

process involving adapting to new social roles, reconnecting with evolving communities and navigating changes in livelihoods and urban spaces. It requires restoring community ties and finding access to services and spaces in an urban environment that may not resemble the one left behind. Reintegration efforts must therefore acknowledge these social changes rather than being premised upon a simple "return to the old life".

A. The role of intangibles in advancing tangible rights

10. Mental health plays a foundational role in the urban (re)integration of internally displaced persons. Not only as the absence of trauma or mental illness, but as a positive state of well-being that encompasses dignity, tranquillity, rootedness, identity and a sense of belonging – all intangible factors that shape whether individuals feel included and able to thrive in their new environments. These aspects directly influence a person's ability to seek services, pursue livelihoods, connect with host communities and rebuild a sense of purpose and normalcy.[4] They are not peripheral needs or issues, but interdependent fundamental rights and central to inclusion, equality and rights realization. Rather than a secondary aspect of humanitarian response, mental health and the intangible elements are foundational to individual recovery and social cohesion. Addressing them meaningfully thus strengthens both individual trajectories and the broader social fabric of increasingly diverse and urbanizing societies.

11. Consequently, while often underrecognized and underprioritized in responses to internal displacement, these elements play a key role in the sustainability of integration efforts. Effective urban integration requires a comprehensive, rights-based approach, in which displaced persons are recognized as active contributors rather than passive recipients and both tangible and intangible dimensions are integrated from the outset. Mental health and psychosocial well-being must be embedded into all sectors and strategies, including urban housing and planning, livelihoods and economic inclusion, public services (including health and education systems), legal identity and civic participation initiatives. Urban integration efforts that neglect these dimensions risk undermining the agency, participation and long-term well-being of displaced populations.

12. Although more difficult to quantify than tangible indicators such as housing or access to services, mental health and psychosocial well-being are increasingly measurable. Emerging evidence from studies and field experiences highlights how well-being, dignity and psychosocial stability contribute to positive integration and have a direct impact on a range of outcomes, from access to livelihoods and services to participation in civic life,[5] and how more tangible forms of support can be adapted to address those intangible elements.

13. Strengthening a sense of dignity and personal value, for instance, has been found to be closely associated with enhanced resilience and increased civic engagement.[6] Similarly, addressing intangible elements, such as trust, identity and belonging, early often proves to accelerate access to tangible rights like documentation, education or employment.[7] Housing support has also been shown to reduce mental stress and

[4] See www.unhcr.org/mt/18417-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-critical-to-integrating-forcibly-displaced-and-stateless-persons.html.

[5] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings* (Geneva, 2007).

[6] Online global consultation on the intangible components of (re)integration, June 2025.

[7] Online consultation with Colombian experts on the intangible components of (re)integration, June 2025.

increase decision-making capacity by promoting a sense of security and calm.[8] Graduation programmes combining cash transfers with vocational training have improved confidence, stability and long-term resilience among displaced young people (e.g. in Colombia).[9] Community-based support structures, such as peer-led groups, psychosocial programmes and safe spaces, also reinforce these efforts by restoring trust and building collective resilience.

B. Displacement and the changing urban landscape: trends and drivers of urban displacement

14. Displacement is usually caused by a combination of factors, such as armed conflict, generalized violence, natural hazards, climate-induced shocks, growing inequality and the loss of livelihoods. Its evolving nature, in particular its increasing urban character, has led to consensus that traditional humanitarian responses, developed primarily for rural or camp-based displacement, are inadequate for upholding the rights of internally displaced persons in urban contexts.

15. Camp-based models, while historically used to deliver emergency assistance, often result in the segregation and marginalization of internally displaced persons. These models can prevent internally displaced persons from enjoying their fundamental rights on an equal footing with the non-displaced population, including the rights to work, education, adequate housing, health, legal identity and freedom of movement, as recognized in international human rights law and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, by disconnecting displaced persons from the economic, legal and civic systems of the host society. Furthermore, these models create parallel systems for assistance and service delivery, an inefficient use of resources that can also undermine urban development and further disparities between displaced and non-displaced populations. Consequently, they frequently fail to provide durable solutions that are sustainable, voluntary and grounded in dignity, safety and non-discrimination.

16. Consultations with internally displaced persons and submissions for the present report point to several decisive factors when considering settlement pathways.

17. First, urban centres often provide improved safety and security options for internally displaced persons compared with conflict-affected or disaster-prone rural areas.[10,11] Cities are more likely to have established law enforcement agencies, legal institutions and protective services that can offer more consistent rule of law and recourse for those experiencing violence or exploitation. In many urban areas, internally displaced persons can also benefit from the anonymity and diversity of the population, which can help them to avoid targeted persecution or discrimination that may be more pronounced in smaller or more homogeneous communities, while

[8] S. Mullainathan and E. Shafir, *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*, (Times Books, 2013).

[9] Online consultation with Colombian experts on the intangible components of (re)integration, June 2025.

[10] Reinna Bermúdez, Francis Tom Temprosa and Odessa Gonzalez Benson, "A disaster approach to displacement: IDPs in the Philippines", *Forced Migration Review*, No. 59 (October 2018).

[11] The fourth national verification survey, carried out in 2023 by the Commission for the Follow-up and Monitoring of Act. No. 1448 of 2011 and the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement, revealed that education (76 per cent), health (71 per cent) and security (68 per cent) were among the main reasons for people to remain where they settled after displacement (input from the United Nations system in Colombia).

fostering a sense of inclusion and shared identity and reducing the visibility of displacement-related stigma.[12]

18. Second, cities often provide internally displaced persons with improved access to basic services, as urban areas typically host a more extensive network of public and private service providers, including healthcare facilities, schools, electricity grids, water supply systems and sanitation infrastructure. Although services can risk saturation by the influx of new residents, this concentration of services increases the potential for internally displaced persons to gain access to essential resources, particularly when they are integrated into existing urban systems. In cities, proximity to hospitals, clinics and pharmacies enhances healthcare access, while established water and sanitation infrastructure reduces health risks associated with poor hygiene.

19. Third, cities offer internally displaced persons significantly broader livelihood opportunities due to their dynamic economies, diverse labour markets and concentration of both formal and informal employment sectors. The density and diversity of urban economies also increase the chances of finding employment that matches displaced individuals' skills or allows for the development of new ones through vocational training and entrepreneurship initiatives. In addition, cities often host microfinance institutions, job placement services and social networks that can support economic integration. While competition for jobs can be intense and exploitative conditions persist, especially in the informal sector, the urban environment generally presents more viable pathways for economic self-reliance and long-term resilience than isolated or resource-scarce rural areas or displacement camps.

20. Moreover, cities often offer internally displaced persons a wider range of housing options compared with rural or camp settings, particularly in terms of rental markets, shared accommodations and proximity to employment and services. Although many internally displaced persons initially settle, due to affordability constraints, in informal or substandard housing, and often on the periphery of cities in informal neighbourhoods not officially recognized in city plans, urban areas still present greater potential for securing more durable and dignified shelter over time. Access to urban housing markets, although not without barriers, enables displaced populations to make choices aligned with their livelihoods, social networks and safety needs. Furthermore, cities are more likely to host public housing schemes, social rental initiatives and non-governmental organization-supported shelter programmes that can be leveraged to support internally displaced person inclusion.

21. In addition, urban centres often provide internally displaced persons with access to greater social capital that can play a crucial role in easing their integration and supporting their recovery and mental health. Social networks, comprising extended family, friends, community associations and agents, religious groups and diaspora communities, can offer practical assistance such as temporary shelter, information on employment opportunities, crucial emotional support and guidance on navigating city services.[13] In many cases, these social ties help internally displaced persons to overcome initial barriers related to access to housing, legal documentation and livelihoods.[14]

[12] Online global consultation on the intangible components of (re)integration, June 2025; and online consultation with internally displaced persons, 14 June 2025.

[13] IOM and Georgetown University, *Progress 2024: Periodic Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement* (Geneva, IOM, 2024).

[14] Submission from C. Jacobs and P. Milabyo Kyamusugulwa; and focus groups held with internally displaced persons held in Quibdó and Medellín, Colombia, 29 May and 3 June 2025.

C. Understanding and responding to urban displacement: a dual-lens approach to risk, resilience and (re)integration

22. Urban displacement requires a nuanced dual-perspective approach, in which both the needs and experiences of internally displaced persons are considered, as are the capacity and dynamics of the urban systems that receive them.[15] Although urban settings may offer access to opportunities for internally displaced persons, such settings also expose them to significant risks. Many are forced into overcrowded, underserved informal settlements that already house other vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees, former combatants and historical poor. These areas often have high levels of poverty, inadequate housing, limited infrastructure, insecure tenure and reduced access to public services. As a result, internally displaced persons face heightened protection risks, such as violence, exploitation, gender-based abuse and discrimination, which deepen their vulnerability and impede the pursuit of durable solutions. For many, urban living is a temporary solution shaped by the hope of returning home or settling elsewhere – often influenced by the availability of safe and dignified living conditions.[16]

23. From the perspective of urban systems, the arrival of displaced populations presents both opportunities and challenges. Cities can benefit from the arrival of displaced populations who bring skills, labour, cultural assets and economic dynamism, if they are recognized as stakeholders in urban development rather than temporary beneficiaries of aid.

24. However, unregulated and exclusionary urban growth can itself become a driver of displacement. Inadequate land use planning, poor enforcement of building standards and environmentally unsustainable development often push vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons, into high-risk zones such as floodplains, unstable hillsides or cyclone-exposed coastlines. Infrastructure projects, gentrification and land speculation can lead to evictions, severing ties to jobs, services and social networks and deepening marginalization. These patterns are observed globally, from megaprojects in South Asia to urban regeneration efforts in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

25. Urban violence, especially in informal settlements dominated by gangs or criminal organizations, has triggered further displacement, known as intra-urban displacement, compounding vulnerability in already fragile communities.[17] Institutional and governance gaps exacerbate these challenges. Many municipalities lack clear policies or the capacity to integrate internally displaced persons, and fragmented mandates, legal ambiguities and financial constraints hinder effective response.[18] As a result, internally displaced person settlements may even be excluded from service delivery and urban planning frameworks. Unclear responsibilities, insufficient resources and poor coordination between national and local actors create a government vacuum. This leaves both internally displaced persons and host communities underserved and vulnerable. In such settings, informal or criminal power structures may fill the void, further eroding trust, protection and the rule of law in urban environments.

[15] J. Crisp, T. Morris and H. Refstie, “Displacement in urban areas: new challenges, new partnerships”, *Disasters*, vol. 36, No. S1 (July 2012).

[16] Submission from the United Nations system in Colombia.

[17] See A/HRC/59/46.

[18] Submission from Cities Alliance (feasibility study).

D. Legal and policy frameworks

26. The right of internally displaced persons to return to their areas of origin or settle elsewhere voluntarily, in safety and with dignity is well established in international legal and policy frameworks, notably through principle 28 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and article XI of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). Principle 29 of the Guiding Principles stipulates the obligation of authorities to ensure that internally displaced persons do not face discrimination, are able to participate equally in public affairs and have equal access to public services, in addition to the restoration of housing, land and property. Article XI of the Kampala Convention imposes a similar obligation on States Parties to resolve property disputes and restore the lands of communities with a special dependency on and attachment to such lands. Housing, land and property issues are addressed more comprehensively through the principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons (referred to as the "Pinheiro principles").

27. However, these frameworks do not clearly articulate a right to integration or reintegration beyond physical relocation, nor do they provide guidance as to what further elements would be required to enable integration or reintegration, aside from addressing discrimination and resolving housing, land and property claims. In the Framework on Durable Solutions, the core elements of integration and reintegration of internally displaced persons are developed further, through eight criteria used to determine whether a durable solution has been achieved. These include participation in public affairs without discrimination and access to effective mechanisms for the restoration of housing, land and property, as envisaged under the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The other six are: long-term safety and security; enjoyment of an adequate standard of living without discrimination; access to livelihoods and employment; access to personal and other documentation without discrimination; family reunification; and access to effective remedies and justice.

28. Although the durable solutions criteria outlined in the Framework are important concrete enablers of sustainable integration and reintegration, they do not fully encompass the intangible elements that inform individual perceptions of whether integration or reintegration has been achieved, such as mental health and psychosocial well-being, identity and a sense of belonging, trust in institutions and social cohesion. This is crucial from a rights-based perspective, as made explicit in section 4.1 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group-Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidance on Solutions to Internal Displacement, which specifies that it is ultimately displaced person themselves who decide whether their displacement has truly ended. The lack of a prevailing international legal or policy framework to guide solutions strategies and ensure that those intangible elements are addressed means that they are not always taken into account effectively during integration and reintegration processes.

29. In the guiding considerations of his Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, the Secretary-General recognizes that internally displaced persons are increasingly settling in urban areas and commits the United Nations to advocating in favour of increased attention to urban displacement and of support for local and municipal authorities. Despite this imperative, relatively few policy frameworks touch explicitly upon the specificities of internal displacement or the integration and reintegration of internally displaced persons in urban contexts. This can result in urban internally displaced persons falling through the cracks between humanitarian responses and municipal planning, which are often led by different groups of actors. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects recognition of the importance of

ensuring that the needs of internally displaced persons are addressed in progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the commitment to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first. This includes progress towards Goal 11, which is aimed at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

30. The New Urban Agenda, endorsed by the General Assembly in 2016, is an international policy framework for the operationalization of Goal 11, providing a blueprint for sustainable urbanization rooted in the inclusion of marginalized groups, job creation and livelihoods and climate change mitigation and adaptation. In the Agenda, the integration of internally displaced persons, alongside refugees and migrants, is reaffirmed as an essential task of municipalities and national Governments; the importance of efforts to foster the social and economic inclusion of these groups, strengthen social cohesion and ensure a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to achieve these aims is also emphasized.[19] The Agenda is aimed at empowering marginalized groups, including internally displaced persons, through the establishment of workplace protections, the safeguarding of their civic participation, the development of advisory committees to provide accountability to these populations, the promotion of cultural competency with respect to the needs of these groups among public sector workers, the collection of disaggregated data, the promotion of values of inclusion and diversity and the expansion of access to vocational training, business support services and social protection to enable their economic integration.

31. The International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning are universal planning principles developed by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Guidelines contain a call for participatory urban and territorial planning, marked by the participation of internally displaced persons among other marginalized groups. With an emphasis on social inclusion and cohesion as foundational to the realization of adequate standards of living, the Guidelines also contain a call for recognizing the distinct needs of various groups, including internally displaced persons, promoting economic growth and livelihoods, ensuring access to basic services and enabling socioeconomic resilience and climate mitigation and adaptation.

32. UN-Habitat has also developed a global framework for inclusive solutions, including (re)integration, to urban internal displacement to guide Governments, the United Nations system and partners.[20] Under the framework, policymakers are encouraged to shift towards an inclusive urban development agenda, address urban displacement as a development challenge, leverage and build upon existing urban structure and prioritize the agency of displacement-affected communities, under an umbrella of government leadership. The framework provides guidance for interventions across six core elements: urban and regional planning; governance and civic participation; land governance; housing, land and property; access to basic services; and social protection, livelihoods and economic growth.

33. In the Americas, through the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action of 2014, updating the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, the fundamental role of municipal governments in supporting solutions for displaced persons was recognized and the existing Cities of Solidarity initiative, designed to strengthen protection and integration efforts led by local authorities, was reinforced with specific provisions aimed at fostering the local integration of displaced persons. National conferences between States and municipalities participating in the initiative are held under the

[19] UN-Habitat, *The New Urban Agenda Illustrated* (Nairobi, 2020), sect. 1.1.3.

[20] See https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/04/un_habitat_towards_inclusive_solutions_to_urban_internal_discplacement_final_-signed.pdf.

framework of the complementary comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework.

34. The European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City provides a practical framework for promoting human rights in urban settings, grounded in the principles of the right to the city: spatial justice, democratic participation, social inclusion and access to common goods. It outlines the responsibilities of local governments to ensure rights such as adequate housing, essential services and dignity for all, regardless of legal status or origin. Although not explicitly addressing internally displaced persons while promoting inclusive urban policies, the Charter helps cities to align with international standards like the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, by providing a strategic tool that can be used to protect internally displaced persons in urban contexts.

35. Countries are increasingly prioritizing local integration of internally displaced persons in law and policy. Integration is highlighted as a key objective in Act No. 1448, on victims and land restitution, adopted by Colombia in 2011; in the 2020 durable solutions strategy and 2024–2029 action plan adopted by Somalia; and in the strategy adopted by Ukraine in 2023. The Action Agenda on Internal Displacement generated particular momentum on that front, with eight countries opening pathways for durable solutions at the national and local levels. Those efforts reflect growing recognition of integration as essential to sustainable and inclusive responses to displacement. At the municipal level, the cities of Medellín in Colombia, Apatzingán de la Constitución in Mexico, Beira in Mozambique and Baidoa in Somalia, as well as numerous locales in the Philippines, have worked to integrate the needs of internally displaced persons into urban planning efforts, while the cities of Bogotá and Barranquilla in Colombia, Tripoli in Lebanon, Niamey in the Niger, Maiduguri in Nigeria and Sfax in Tunisia have worked to incorporate measures that address mental health, psychosocial support and other specific needs of internally displaced persons into public service delivery through local policy frameworks.[21]

III. Protection challenges and human rights risks in urban settings

36. Although urban settings offer potential pathways to durable solutions, they also expose internally displaced persons to new and intensified protection risks, including challenges in access to mental health and social cohesion. These risks are often compounded by legal invisibility, poor living conditions, systemic discrimination and institutional neglect,[22] and they increase as urban displacement becomes more protracted and widespread.

A. Right to recognition as a person before the law and participation in public life

37. One of the most pressing protection risks for urban internally displaced persons is legal invisibility. Many displaced individuals arrive in cities without personal identification or civil documentation, either because their papers were lost during flight or they were never formally registered. Without valid documentation, internally displaced persons face difficulties gaining access to basic services such as healthcare, education and legal assistance, remaining especially vulnerable and hindering their

[21] Submission from United Cities and Local Governments.

[22] Submission from the Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law of the Council of Europe.

ability and agency to rebuild their lives.[23] They are often unable to register births, gain access to schools or secure housing contracts, leaving them effectively excluded from public life and entrenching their marginalization. This legal exclusion not only undermines their dignity and autonomy, but also increases their risk of arbitrary arrest, harassment or exploitation by landlords, employers and even public authorities.[24] The absence of comprehensive legal protection frameworks tailored to urban displacement further exacerbates these challenges.

38. The right to participate in public affairs, including the right to vote and to stand for election in one's own country, is a fundamental right enshrined in international human rights law[25] that applies to all citizens, including internally displaced persons. Nevertheless, internally displaced persons often face significant legal, administrative and practical barriers that prevent them from exercising their electoral rights on an equal basis with the wider citizenry. In many contexts, they are excluded from electoral processes, whether through oversight or deliberate restriction. In some cases, political marginalization is intertwined with the very causes of displacement, reinforcing cycles of disenfranchisement and instability. Exclusion from political life deepens the social and economic marginalization of displaced populations and denies them the opportunity to influence decisions that directly affect their lives. This lack of agency weakens prospects for durable solutions and further erodes democratic inclusion. In contrast, Ukrainian internally displaced persons consulted cited civic participation as a key enabler of feeling integrated into the community.

39. Moreover, many national policies remain focused on return or rural resettlement, with the growing reality of urban displacement overlooked. As a result, internally displaced persons are often absent from urban decision-making and policy frameworks. Legal mechanisms and participatory structures rarely account for displaced populations in cities, limiting their voices in shaping urban development. This exclusion compromises their ability to integrate, reduces social cohesion and undermines their contributions to the economic and social fabric of urban life.

B. Right to adequate housing

40. Displacement often results in the loss of land and housing, with wide-reaching consequences for the full spectrum of human rights.[26] Disrupted livelihoods plunge displaced individuals into poverty, making adequate housing increasingly inaccessible. In urban areas, where housing shortages are already severe, internally displaced persons are often forced into informal settlements, slums or unstable rental arrangements in peripheral zones. These environments typically lack basic infrastructure, secure tenure and protection from environmental hazards or eviction, severely undermining rights to health, safety and an adequate standard of living.

41. The absence of formal tenure discourages investment in housing improvements and exposes displaced populations to the constant threat of forced evictions and exploitation, which can also lead to secondary displacement, deepening the trauma and instability experienced by internally displaced persons and maintaining a level of stress not conducive to integration.[27] Such evictions constitute violations of the right to adequate housing under international human rights law.

[23] For more information, see A/74/261, A/74/261/Corr.1, A/77/182, A/HRC/47/37 and A/HRC/50/24.

[24] Submission from the Migration Youth and Children Platform.

[25] See A/HRC/50/24.

[26] See A/HRC/47/37.

[27] See https://blumont.org/blog/internally-displaced-peace-of-mind-rental-support; https://habitatgaston.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Evidence-Brief-How-does-housing-

42. Insecure tenure also creates space for abuse. Landlords may impose exorbitant rents or collaborate with gangs to intimidate tenants. Vulnerable groups, such as women-headed households, persons with disabilities and the elderly, are especially at risk. Women may face sexual exploitation in exchange for shelter, and their children may be forced to change schools, disrupting education and social integration. These patterns deepen inequality and block displaced families from building stable and dignified lives in urban contexts.

C. Right to an adequate standard of living

43. Despite the relative concentration of public services in cities, internally displaced persons often face significant barriers to gaining access to healthcare, education, water, sanitation and electricity. Overburdened municipal systems often struggle to meet the needs of growing populations, especially in contexts of rapid urbanization and constrained governance capacity. Internally displaced persons may be deprioritized in service delivery due to a lack of formal status, residency documents or exclusion from local planning. Tensions can also arise around shared urban resources, such as water points and markets, when internally displaced persons gain access to them without community consultation.

44. In health systems, internally displaced persons often face long wait times, language barriers and discrimination from medical staff. Access to mental health and psychosocial support, which is critical for those who have experienced trauma and social dislocation, is extremely limited. In education, displaced children face barriers such as curriculum mismatches, lack of documentation or the cost of school materials. The situation is particularly dire in informal settlements, where schools and health clinics are often scarce or absent. These service access deficits undermine fundamental rights and contribute to entrenched cycles of exclusion, vulnerability and inequality for displaced populations in urban environments.

D. Right to an effective remedy and access to justice

45. Access to justice, both formal and informal, is essential for internally displaced persons to achieve durable solutions. This includes the right to restitution or compensation for lost housing, land and property, as well as accountability for displacement caused by human rights violations. Justice must serve a dual role: addressing past harms, while ensuring that internally displaced persons can rebuild their lives free from discrimination and future displacement.

46. A justice-centred approach promotes sustainable local integration by restoring trust in institutions, fostering reconciliation and tackling the root causes of displacement. Without these foundations, long-term recovery and social cohesion remain out of reach for displaced populations in urban settings.

E. The right to work and the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work

47. Although cities may offer greater access to economic opportunities, internally displaced persons often face significant barriers to formal employment. Legal and administrative obstacles, such as a lack of civil documentation, unclear residency status or skill mismatches, frequently excludes them from the formal labour market.

affect-childrens-education.pdf; and www.esri.ie/news/poor-housing-conditions-harm-childrens-health-and-development.

As a result, many are pushed into insecure, low-wage informal work in sectors like domestic labour, construction or street vending. These jobs are typically unregulated and expose internally displaced persons to exploitation, unsafe conditions, wage theft and a lack of social protections.

48. The absence of vocational training, financial inclusion and business development support further limits their ability to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Without targeted assistance to bridge these gaps, internally displaced persons remain locked in cycles of poverty and dependence, unable to fully exercise their rights to work, a decent standard of living or economic self-reliance.

F. Social cohesion challenges

49. Internally displaced persons face substantial challenges to fully realizing their economic, social and cultural rights in urban areas. Rapid urbanization, limited resources and unequal aid distribution often strain relationships between internally displaced persons and host communities, especially in fragile, low-income neighbourhoods already suffering from overcrowding, poor infrastructure and high unemployment. Competition over services, housing and jobs can lead to tensions, inflated rents, lower wages and overloaded public systems, while both city and humanitarian budgets struggle to keep up.

50. Internally displaced persons commonly resort to informal work or petty trade, sometimes accepting very low wages. This can displace local low-skilled workers or drive down wages, and further eroding social cohesion.[28] Safety concerns may discourage internally displaced persons from seeking work in busy public areas, and they may be vulnerable to exploitation, extortion or recruitment by armed groups due to their social and legal insecurity. Evidence highlights, for instance, that displaced families without network protection feel more susceptible to harassment, violence or labour exploitation[29] by abusive employers or gangs. Stereotypes portraying internally displaced persons as sources of crime or economic threat intensify social divisions.

51. Cultural and linguistic differences can exacerbate these divides. In diverse urban settings, internally displaced persons may carry the stigma of displacement or be associated with specific ethnic, political or religious identities. Perceived favouritism in aid delivery or employment can heighten intergroup grievances, particularly in areas with histories of communal conflict.

52. Displaced Indigenous populations are especially vulnerable, often losing access to ancestral lands and cultural practices that are vital to their identity and rights, while being excluded from decision-making processes and denied recognition of their governance systems. While rigorous evidence is scarce, field reports frequently note that in regions with intercommunal conflict, narratives of ethnic favouritism can deepen mistrust.[30] For instance, in South Asian cities, displaced communities have reported experiencing discrimination and social exclusion from host populations who perceive aid interventions, such as targeted cash transfers or shelter assistance, as unfairly favouring internally displaced persons over equally vulnerable urban poor. The erosion of communal cohesion and cultural practices poses a serious threat to the right to maintain and develop their cultural heritage, languages and spiritual traditions. These risks are further exacerbated by systemic exclusion from decision-making processes and limited recognition of customary governance structures.

[28] Online consultation with internally displaced persons, 14 June 2025.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Submission from Cities Alliances.

53. Meaningful participation is key to overcoming those challenges. In consultations, internally displaced persons consistently highlight that inclusive community engagement can serve to reduce stigma, foster trust and recognize displaced individuals, not as burdens, but as contributors with dignity, histories and the potential to strengthen collective well-being.

G. Right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health: mental health risks

54. Evidence stemming from consultations and focus group discussions showed that internally displaced persons often carry heavier burdens of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychosocial issues than local host populations.[31] Accordingly, global studies have demonstrated that almost everyone affected by conflict or disaster experiences psychological distress and that about one in five of those affected will go on to develop a long-term condition, such as major depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder.[32] These challenges stem from acute traumas and chronic stressors, such as exposure to violence, loss of family, social networks and livelihood and feelings of helplessness and continued insecurity, compounded by disadvantageous urban conditions.[33] Studies of urban internally displaced persons in developing countries consistently report high levels of distress, fear and hopelessness under such conditions.

55. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to trauma. Gender-based violence, including sexual assault, domestic abuse, forced marriage and exploitation, is tragically common in displacement. Women frequently become sole caregivers for children or older relatives while coping with poverty and social marginalization, which can lead to distress or the development of somatic symptoms without diagnosis.

56. Internally displaced children and teenagers often endure or witness violence, experience dangerous journeys during displacement and suffer severe disruption of family networks and schooling and the lack of a safe and supportive physical environment, leading to elevated rates of emotional and behavioural disorders. These experiences inflict negative feelings and even “toxic stress” on developing brains, impairing learning and emotional regulation and obstructing children from reaching their full learning potential.

57. The multi-tiered “pyramid” approach to mental health and psychosocial support model acknowledges that suffering and pain manifest across a broad emotional spectrum, not always amounting to trauma that necessitates individualized medical or psychological treatment. In this respect, most people – those at the base of the pyramid – benefit most from community-based and culturally grounded collective responses, rather than from specialized clinical care. Evidence confirms that psychosocial and cultural interventions addressing collective suffering can both alleviate group-level distress and prevent the escalation of individual conditions that might otherwise require more intensive and long-term support.[34]

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[31] David Cantor and others, “Understanding the health needs of internally displaced persons: a scoping review”, *Journal of Migration and Health*, vol. 4 (2021).

[32] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, “Inside the crisis you don’t see: how war impacts women’s mental health”, 7 April 2025.

[33] See www.internal-displacement.org/expert-analysis/5-key-findings-on-internal-displacement-and-mental-health; https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10550570; https://s3.eu-north-1.amazonaws.com/cdn.sheltercluster.org/public/Mindful%20Sheltering_0.pdf; and https://reliefweb.int/report/world/wider-impacts-humanitarian-shelter-and-settlements-assistance-key-findings-report.

[34] Online global consultation on the intangible components of (re)integration, June 2025.

58. Interventions in non-health sectors, such as housing, livelihoods and education, can significantly enhance psychosocial well-being when designed with a psychosocial perspective. Recognizing the latent mental health potential of these interventions strengthens community resilience and facilitates emotional recovery. Moreover, understanding trauma as a continuum of experiences, rather than through a purely clinical lens, can support the broader integration of mental health and psychosocial support into transitional justice and displacement policies.[35]

59. Cultural expression, storytelling and art are vital for healing, reducing trauma and fostering belonging. International frameworks like the Inter-Agency Standing Committee mental health and psychosocial support minimum service package contain calls for integrated and community-based care, and several countries, such as Colombia, Iraq and Ukraine,[36] have demonstrated the value of community-based healing, combining psychosocial support with cultural programming to promote reconciliation between internally displaced persons and host communities and facilitate deeper and culturally grounded understandings of pain, trauma and recovery.

60. Mental health initiatives for internally displaced persons are increasingly being recognized in humanitarian policy. In the 2018 edition of *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, published by the Sphere Association, mental health is identified as a universal concern in crisis settings. The *Handbook* contains a call for the integration of mental health and psychosocial support across sectors and an outline of standards for basic mental health services and community support. Complementary guidance from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the WHO mental health gap action programme provides an outline for a layered model of care, from grass-roots peer support to specialized clinical interventions. These are already being applied: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations train volunteers, provide child-friendly spaces, embed counsellors in health services and support school-based psychosocial care. Such programmes contribute to broader frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. There is also growing recognition of the need to move beyond medicalized paradigms and adopt more holistic understandings of trauma and recovery.[37]

61. Despite growing recognition, mental health remains critically underrepresented in urban displacement responses. Funding is minimal: just 1 to 2 per cent of global health spending. In low-income countries, a shortage of trained professionals further limits access. Internally displaced persons often remain invisible in overcrowded cities, and mental health is rarely included in needs assessments, undermining effective planning.

62. Barriers to care are widespread: stigma, lack of awareness, legal and financial hurdles, inaccessible services and cultural mismatches discourage internally displaced persons from seeking help. Persons with disabilities face added physical and communicative obstacles. Coordination between humanitarian and development actors is often fragmented, leaving the most vulnerable groups – women, Indigenous peoples and LGBTQ+ individuals – underserved. Mental health is frequently sidelined in favour of physical survival, leaving psychosocial needs neglected.

[35] Virginie Ladisch and Shayna Lewis, "'The search for people's well-being': mainstreaming a psychosocial approach to transitional justice", International Center for Transitional Justice, September 2024.

[36] Online global consultation on the intangible components of (re)integration, June 2025.

[37] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package* (Geneva, 2022); and Ladisch and Lewis, "'The search for people's well-being'".

63. Addressing those challenges requires fully integrating mental health and psychosocial support into urban displacement strategies through inclusive and multisectoral approaches. Priorities include trauma-informed care in schools and clinics, culturally appropriate and low-cost interventions, peer counsellor training and investment in grass-roots networks (e.g. art, sport and faith-based initiatives). Operationalizing Inter-Agency Standing Committee and Sphere Association guidelines through inter-agency mental health and psychosocial support groups and psychological first aid training outreach, through mobile clinics, telehealth services and awareness campaigns, must be centred on the needs of the most vulnerable groups and be designed with the participation of affected communities.

64. Programmes should ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities and Indigenous communities, incorporating sign language, inclusive venues and culturally relevant design. Intercultural dialogue is essential to tailoring mental health and psychosocial support to diverse identities, traditions and concepts of home. For Indigenous and other minorities, it is necessary to allow for intercultural dialogues and nuanced understandings of the notions of integration and home, so as to tailor the interventions to each group's visions and needs.

65. A people-centred, cross-sectoral approach that embeds mental health and psychosocial support into all areas of urban response is vital, not only to support healing and recovery, but also to strengthen social cohesion and advance durable and inclusive solutions. Moreover, multisectoral and people-based approach strategies are essential in institutional interventions for addressing mental health and psychosocial barriers. Fully embedding mental health and psychosocial support in urban displacement strategies is not only essential for healing and dignity, it also strengthens social cohesion and lays the foundation for truly durable solutions

IV. Conclusions and good practices

66. As more people are displaced to, within and between cities, the boundaries between displacement, economic migration and urban poverty continue to blur. As such, the (re)integration of internally displaced persons cannot be addressed in isolation from other challenges that cities face or from the urban-rural continuum. The integration of internally displaced persons into urban areas must be understood as a shared, long-term responsibility that spans sectors, governance levels and mandates, with States having the primary responsibility to protect internally displaced persons' rights as citizens and residents.[38] Without inclusive urban governance mechanisms and targeted investment in shared public goods, the coexistence of internally displaced persons, host communities and other groups risks entrenching parallel societies, undermining long-term urban resilience and social stability.

67. Urban displacement presents an opportunity to rethink traditional approaches and embrace more integrated and people-centred solutions. As active contributors to urban economies and social life, the inclusion of internally displaced persons in urban planning and decision-making processes is essential for promoting social cohesion and strengthening the resilience of cities. Policymakers must treat integration and reintegration as equal, rights-based options, and each should be included in national durable solutions plans. For urban contexts, all levels of government should work both together and with humanitarian, development and peace actors to include internally displaced persons and returnees in urban planning. The elements set out below are key.

[38] Online consultation with mayors, 5 June 2025.

A. Multilevel governance is essential

68. Effective (re)integration of internally displaced persons requires strong government leadership, cross-level coordination and inclusive governance that ensures that the voices of internally displaced person are heard. Local governments must be empowered with adequate resources, legal authority and a structured dialogue with national authorities to serve all residents without exclusion.

69. Fiscal transfers should reflect actual population needs, with a view to sustainable local revenue generation rather than reliance on international support. In Colombia, the Government's strategy of co-responsibility offers a promising model, by clarifying roles and responsibilities with regard to internally displaced persons and encouraging local ownership through an action-planning process and joint funding opportunities alongside capacity-building initiatives. Although structural power imbalances persist, initiatives like the local integration policy of Bogotá, which is aligned with national efforts to embed durable solutions, represent important progress towards inclusive urban displacement responses.

B. Internally displaced persons must be recognized as members of the citizenry

70. Viewing internally displaced persons as citizens with specific displacement-related needs, and not merely as aid recipients, reaffirms the State's primary responsibility to uphold their rights. This shift serves not only to recognize their rights, but also to support their agency as contributing members of the community, and opens a pathway to restoring the social contract damaged by displacement and to rebuilding trust in State institutions. In contexts where documentation is lost or destroyed, restoring access to civil and legal papers, such as identification documents, educational certificates and voter cards, is essential for enabling internally displaced persons to gain access to jobs, education and public services.

71. Mobile registries and voter reforms can play a critical role in recognizing internally displaced persons as members of the citizenry. In Mozambique, national and local governments, supported by international organizations and local partners, conducted mobile civil registration campaigns in districts hosting internally displaced persons. Once documentation was issued, international organizations assisted internally displaced persons with the enrolment of their children in school and with gaining access to medical care. In Ukraine, reforms to the voting registration process in 2020 allowed internally displaced persons to register to vote in their areas of displacement. Previously, internally displaced persons had been disenfranchised if they left their electoral district. Those reforms serve to recognize the rights of internally displaced persons and facilitate a more locally owned response to internal displacement.

C. Intangible elements are central to (re)integration and durable solutions

72. The Framework on Durable Solutions remains the authoritative reference for a human rights-based approach to durable solutions for internally displaced persons. Its eight criteria are vital for addressing the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons, but durable solutions must also include the intangible dimensions of (re)integration, such as mental health, identity, belonging and social cohesion. These elements are not optional; they are a starting point for solutions and a bridge to providing access to the tangible dimensions of solutions and rights, such as

education, employment and civic participation. These often-overlooked factors are also essential for the dignity, resilience and sustainable inclusion of internally displaced persons and host communities alike. A multi-tiered "pyramid" approach is necessary; few require specialized care, and most will benefit from community-based and culturally grounded support. Respecting the dignity of internally displaced persons yields measurable benefits: increased well-being, cooperation and civic engagement. Intangible components must be integrated into all levels of the displacement response; otherwise, the sustainable (re)integration of internally displaced persons will remain out of reach, and cities will risk instability and stalled development.

73. In Ukraine, mental health support for internally displaced persons is provided through both the formal healthcare system and a range of civil society, religious and international organizations. A standout initiative – an integration hub in Mukacheve – successfully fostered social cohesion by creating a multifunctional space featuring a digital library, coffee shop, co-working room and music studio. It hosted joint activities for internally displaced persons and host community members. Its success stemmed from addressing the needs of both groups and securing strong local government support.[39]

D. Inclusion of internally displaced persons in urban data and development

74. Urban decision-making should be guided by spatial data on vulnerabilities and inequalities – a "people-in-place" approach. Internally displaced persons must be included in urban data systems, with their specific needs monitored to inform national and local responses and to track their progress towards durable solutions. Insights on displacement and informality that emerge from data collection should shape inclusive urban development plans. Intangible dimensions of integration, such as social cohesion, trust and inclusion, can be measured through perception surveys, participatory planning and monitoring tools. In the Sudan, inclusive and participatory data collection processes conducted from 2020 to 2022 led to local action plans in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, aligning with the priorities of internally displaced persons, displacement-affected communities, authorities and other local and international organizations. The community sessions respected diversity, allowing different groups, as distinguished by sex, age and means of livelihoods, to engage in the dialogue. These efforts were part of a large-scale durable solutions analysis conducted across 17 localities and contributed to the operationalization of the country's national durable solutions strategy at the local level.[40]

E. Tenure security is a key enabler of (re)integration

75. Ensuring the right to adequate housing requires recognizing various forms of tenure, including rental arrangements, and supporting rent subsidies and pathways to homeownership. Durable solutions are strengthened by leveraging existing housing stock, enabling land access through local authorities and implementing effective land administration systems.

[39] United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR, "Local action on forced displacement: lessons and stories from subnational programmes and partnerships", 2024.

[40] Submissions from UN-Habitat, the International Institute for Environment and Development and the Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service.

76. Tenure security, whether through social housing, affordable rentals or the regularization of informal settlements, helps internally displaced persons to settle, invest in their surroundings and build stronger community ties, thus fostering a sense of belonging and confidence in the future. In Somalia, internally displaced persons facing eviction in Baidoa were relocated to serviced land with land titles under an inclusive urban expansion plan.[41] Legal security of tenure and protection from forced eviction can also be guaranteed through tenure regularization, targeted social housing schemes that are inclusive of internally displaced persons (as emphasized by displaced populations in Ukraine) and the integration of housing needs within broader social protection and welfare policies.

F. Community engagement and social protection

77. Integration programmes that are community-based, addressing internally displaced persons, host families and other resident populations, such as joint livelihood cooperatives or neighbourhood committees, can foster cohesion. Cultural and arts-based initiatives help to foster belonging, reduce stigma and reshape public perceptions of internally displaced persons, while also supporting mental health and psychosocial well-being. Engaging local leaders, cultural actors and community platforms reinforces inclusive participation and creates shared spaces for dialogue, healing and reconciliation. In Colombia, programmes established under Act No. 1448 of 2011, on victims and land restitution, have supported collective healing through culture and art, promoting reconciliation, reducing tensions and supporting participants in regaining their sense of agency. Successful programmes relied on culturally sensitive approaches, mental health integration, community involvement, collaborative planning and progress measurement.[42]

G. Economic opportunities support self-reliance and (re)integration

78. To support the sustainable integration and reintegration of internally displaced persons, targeted economic empowerment strategies are essential. Tailored skills training and small-business grant programmes can enhance self-reliance among internally displaced persons in urban contexts, and dedicated efforts to facilitate the acquisition of new professional competencies are critical for those transitioning from rural to urban settings. Effective integration policies should include access to entrepreneurship funds and prioritized inclusion in public works initiatives. For internally displaced persons returning to their urban places of origin, recognizing and leveraging skills gained during displacement (such as agricultural experience or vocational trades like carpentry) through job placement and livelihood support programmes can significantly ease the transition and contribute to community resilience. These inclusive and adaptive measures are vital to restoring dignity and promoting long-term economic stability.

79. A notable example is the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS Partnership), led by UNHCR, the International Labour Organization, UNICEF and the World Bank,[43] which has successfully supported economic inclusion in displacement-affected areas. In Ethiopia, the programme facilitated access to business licences, work permits and

[41] Online consultation with mayors, 5 June 2025.

[42] Online consultation with Colombian experts on the intangible components of (re)integration, June 2025.

[43] More information on the PROSPECTS Partnership is available at www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/partnership-improving-prospects-forcibly-displaced-persons-and-host.

joint economic activities for over 14,500 internally displaced persons. Across operations in multiple countries, the programme reached more than 129,000 individuals, including both displaced persons and host communities, strengthening economic resilience and social cohesion through inclusive livelihood support. Such initiatives demonstrate the value of multi-stakeholder cooperation and the integration of economic inclusion efforts within broader development frameworks.

V. Recommendations

80. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that States:**

(a) **Provide strong political leadership through a nationally owned whole-of-government, multisectoral approach to internal displacement. This requires coordinated action across the national, regional and local levels, empowering development, housing and planning institutions, not just humanitarian actors, to drive solution planning and implementation;**

(b) **Strengthen and resource local governance structures to respond effectively to internal displacement by establishing early warning systems and ensuring predictable and adequate financing; collect updated data to inform legal and policy frameworks to address urban displacement; and create inclusive and participatory platforms that enable internally displaced persons to engage in local planning and decision-making;**

(c) **Adopt area-based, human rights-centred and culturally sensitive approaches to inclusive development and durable solutions for internally displaced persons in urban settings that address tangible and intangible dimensions of (re)integration, in which the principles of equality, self-determination and free, prior and informed consent are upheld, in accordance with international human rights standards, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;**

(d) **Recognize internally displaced persons as agents of change, not just beneficiaries, to foster dignity, reduce stigma and strengthen civic engagement, especially in urban and impoverished settings;**

(e) **Avoid establishing parallel systems for internally displaced persons in favour of inclusive and equitable measures for all groups, embedded within national and local urban development strategies. Particular attention should be paid to the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of internally displaced women, children, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities;**

(f) **Incorporate the psychosocial dimensions, such as mental health, identity, a sense of belonging and social cohesion, into all displacement response initiatives and reintegration planning. These dimensions should be measured to ensure that they foster self-reliance, stronger community ties and long-term stability;**

(g) **Equip national statistical offices to produce robust statistics on internally displaced persons, including on progress towards the achievement of durable solutions in line with the Framework on Durable Solutions and the intangible elements of (re)integration, in a manner that allows comparison with other population groups. Invest in perception surveys and participatory tools to monitor social integration, cohesion and well-being as part of durable solutions programming;**

(h) **Adopt urban profiling as a critical evidence-based tool in the design, implementation and monitoring of durable solutions to displacement in urban**

environments and use profiling results to guide decision-making on urban planning and development. Data should identify the cities in greatest need of assistance for the protection of internally displaced persons;

(i) **Guarantee legal security of tenure and protection from forced eviction through tenure regularization, targeted social housing schemes that are inclusive of internally displaced persons and the integration of housing needs within broader social protection and welfare policies;**

(j) **Transition from a reliance on short-term international humanitarian aid to medium- and long-term domestic funding and public investment strategies. This requires establishing predictable, flexible and context-specific financing models that incorporate durable solutions into national, subnational and municipal budgets, thus ensuring sustainable, inclusive outcomes for internally displaced persons, host communities and other residents.**

81. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that United Nations bodies and international organizations:**

(a) **Operationalize an area-based and human rights-centred approach to finding durable solutions to internal displacement, while implementing guidance and mechanisms adopted at the end of the mandate of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement;**

(b) **Support Governments in drafting and implementing legal and policy reforms that institutionalize multilevel governance in the response to internal displacement and serve to recognize local integration as a legitimate settlement option for internally displaced persons. National frameworks should provide for access by internally displaced persons to all rights, including the right to mental health;**

(c) **Enhance local government planning and delivery capacity, support dialogue by local and national authorities on internal displacement, as well as their efforts to systematically collect and disaggregate data by displacement status, and scale up the use of urban profiling tools. In doing so, it is essential to increase collaboration with leaders of and organizations led by internally displaced persons and with local authorities to support community-based and locally led initiatives that foster durable solutions for internally displaced persons, that build trust and that promote more equitable power-sharing in decision-making processes;**

(d) **Strengthen the dialogue between national, regional and local governments on inclusive urban development and on an integrated and multilevel response to human mobility and displacement, with internally displaced persons, as citizens, entitled to access to rights and services;**

(e) **Facilitate the inclusion of internally displaced persons into existing national and local systems that help them to access their rights and avoid creating parallel systems. This includes facilitating access by internally displaced persons to personal documentation, their participation in livelihoods opportunities, such as vocational training, financial literacy and startup capital, and supporting health and education systems in expanding capacity and including internally displaced persons;**

(f) **Integrate mental health and psychosocial support as a core component of all displacement responses – not as a secondary service, but as essential for enabling access to rights and self-reliance;**

(g) **Build evidence and document knowledge on best practices for supporting the mental health of internally displaced persons and advocate that humanitarian tools should make mental health more visible.**