

# **RESEARCHING INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT**

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## **Getting the Numbers Right: the Challenge of Measuring Durable Solutions for IDPs in Libya**

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## Abstract

*Despite increasing global attention on internal displacement over the past three decades, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide has steadily increased, reaching an all-time high of nearly 60 million IDPs in 2021. Against this backdrop, both the report of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and the Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement call for strengthened efforts to identify and pursue durable solutions for IDPs, while highlighting the importance of strong data and evidence. This starts by collecting more accurate national statistics on IDPs.*

*Drawing on the example of Libya, where the Libyan government and the United Nations have undertaken a set of initiatives to support durable solutions for IDPs, this contribution discusses some of the key challenges in the development of accurate and, to the extent possible, comparable statistics on IDPs. These include the lack of a shared understanding among key partners at the country level on some of the key concepts and notions, including the definitions of IDPs and durable solutions. It also includes the lack of agreement as to “when displacement ends”; that is, when persons identified as IDPs should no longer be considered as such and thus be removed from the estimated number of IDPs in a country. While the adoption of a national Durable Solutions Strategy by the Libyan authorities has provided all relevant actors in the country with a common framework, including an agreement on the definitions, there is still a long way to go to put in place a system to measure the attainment of durable solutions in line with international standards.*

## Keywords

Durable solutions; IDPs; internal displacement; Libya; IDP data

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## 1. Introduction

Despite increasing global attention on internal displacement over the past three decades, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide has steadily increased. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) recorded an estimated 59.1 million IDPs at the end of 2021, the highest number on record.<sup>1</sup> Since then, an additional six million people have been displaced within Ukraine following the Russian invasion in March 2022.<sup>2</sup>

Against this backdrop, the search for so-called durable solutions for IDPs has become a priority for the international community, as evidenced by the various initiatives taken over the past years to bring attention to the situation of IDPs and support ways for them to rebuild their lives.<sup>3</sup> The most recent initiatives include the publication in September 2021 of the long-awaited report of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (HLP) titled *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future*, which provides recommendations to tackle what has become a “global crisis”.<sup>4</sup> The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General (SG) subsequently adopted an Action Agenda on Internal Displacement (‘Action Agenda’) setting out the commitments of the UN in support of the implementation of the HLP’s report.<sup>5</sup> Both the report of the High-Level Panel and the SG’s Action Agenda focus on finding these elusive durable solutions.

The challenge, as often, is to turn the recommendations and commitments in the HLP’s report and the SG’s Action Agenda into reality and to bring concrete changes for the benefit of displaced persons. As the HLP noted, supporting solutions for millions of IDPs, host

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<sup>1</sup> IDMC, *Global Internal Displacement Report (GRID) 2022*, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022/>.

<sup>2</sup> Figures as of 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2022. See IOM, *Returns Increase in Ukraine, but 6.2 Million People Remain Internally Displaced*, 28 June 2022, available at: <https://www.iom.int/news/returns-increase-ukraine-62-million-people-remain-internally-displaced>.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Secretary-General of the United Nations called for new and protracted internal displacement to be reduced by at least 50 per cent by 2030. See UN General Assembly (UNGA), *One humanity: shared responsibility. Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit*, A/70/709, 2 February 2016, para. 27, available at: [https://agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2019/Jun/\[A-70-709\]%20Secretary-General's%20Report%20for%20WHS\\_0.pdf](https://agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2019/Jun/[A-70-709]%20Secretary-General's%20Report%20for%20WHS_0.pdf). The GP20 Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for IDPs was launched in 2018, coinciding with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. See GP20, *20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: A Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018-2020*, 23 May 2018, <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/20180523-gp20-plan-of-action-final.pdf>. The following year, the UN Secretary-General established a High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, whose mandate included “identif[y]ing and address[ing] gaps in the response to internal displacement and provid[ing] recommendations to ensure a more effective response”, with a focus on “durable and practical solutions”. See Letter by UN Member States calling for the creation of the panel, 10 May 2019, available at: [https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/sites/www.un.org.internal-displacement-panel/files/letter\\_to\\_the\\_un\\_secretary-general\\_on\\_high\\_level\\_panel\\_-\\_idps\\_10\\_may\\_2019.pdf](https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/sites/www.un.org.internal-displacement-panel/files/letter_to_the_un_secretary-general_on_high_level_panel_-_idps_10_may_2019.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement. A Vision for the Future*, September 2021, <https://internaldisplacement-panel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HLP-report-WEB.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *The United Nations Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Follow-Up to the Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement*, June 2022, [https://www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/assets/pdf/Action-Agenda-on-Internal-Displacement\\_EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/assets/pdf/Action-Agenda-on-Internal-Displacement_EN.pdf).

communities and displacement-affected nations “require[s] fundamental changes to the current approach to solutions”, including a stronger engagement of development and peace actors.<sup>6</sup> These efforts, the HLP added, “must draw on strong data and evidence”.<sup>7</sup>

As such, the need for accurate and actionable data on IDPs to inform more effective policy and programmatic responses to internal displacement is a prime concern and challenge.<sup>8</sup> Although IDPs represent the greatest portion of displaced persons worldwide, collecting statistics on them remains extremely challenging for various reasons. Beyond operational issues, such as the lack of access to areas where people have been displaced or the difficulty to identify IDPs in urban contexts, there are other limitations including lack of national policies and laws on internal displacement in most countries; limited knowledge of the international policy framework; use of different definitions of IDPs at the country level, as well as criteria to determine when an IDPs should stop being counted as a displaced person; and the lack of guidance on the collection of data on internal displacement among countries and international agencies to allow meaningful comparisons, among other issues. Until these issues are resolved, IDP figures provided at the national and global levels will remain subject to caution.

Efforts have been made over the past years to support the measurement of durable solutions in a more coherent and systematic manner<sup>9</sup> and develop a harmonized statistical framework on IDPs that would also allow for comparison between countries.<sup>10</sup> To date, however, very few countries affected by internal displacement have worked toward the implementation of a system to measure the attainment of durable solutions and produce statistics on the number of IDPs in line with existing guidance. In this context, this contribution uses the example of Libya, where the Libyan government and the UN have undertaken a set of initiatives to support durable solutions for IDPs, to illustrate current limitations with regard to the way IDP numbers are measured, while also discussing possible ways to overcome such challenges.

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<sup>6</sup> HLP, *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement*, p. ii.

<sup>7</sup> HLP, *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement*, p. iii.

<sup>8</sup> HLP, *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement*, Recommendation 7; *The United Nations Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> See the *Interagency Durable Solutions Indicator Library*, available at <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/> and the *Durable Solutions Analysis Guide*, available at <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Interagency-Durable-Solutions-Analysis-Guide-March2020-1.pdf>. Both tools were developed between 2015 and 2018 as part of an inter-agency initiative led by the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of Internally Displaced Persons and implemented by the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS).

<sup>10</sup> In 2017, the Expert Group on Refugee Statistics (EGRIS), which became the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons, and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS) in 2021, developed a *Technical Report on Statistics of Internally Displaced Persons*. See EGRIS, *Technical Report on Statistics of Internally Displaced Persons: Current Practice and Recommendations for Improvement*, March 2018, available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Technical-Report/national-reporting/Technical-report-on-statistics-of-IDPs-E.pdf>. The Technical Report led to the development of a set of recommendations on internally displaced persons statistics, which have been endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission. See EGRIS, *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics*, March 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/600188974.pdf>.

## 2. Search for durable solutions for IDPs in Libya

Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced within Libya due to successive waves of armed conflict and persecution since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The situation stabilized in October 2020 with the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the main warring factions and the installation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) in March 2021. While political instability persists, the improved security situation in the country has led many IDPs to return over the past two years, raising expectations that the situation of IDPs can be resolved.

### *2.1 Making durable solutions for IDPs a national priority*

In this context, both the national authorities and the United Nations have prioritized the search for durable solutions for IDPs. In late 2020, the Libyan authorities requested the support of the UN to develop a durable solutions strategy setting out a clear path toward the resolution of internal displacement in the country. The national Durable Solutions Strategy was finalized in July 2022 following extensive consultations and is pending formal adoption by the Libyan authorities.<sup>11</sup> In the meantime, the United Nations adopted a Collective Outcome on Durable Solutions for IDPs, endorsed by the Libyan government, which commits international actors from across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace pillars to contribute to the implementation of the Strategy and the attainment of durable solutions for IDPs.<sup>12</sup> The development of such frameworks counts among the main recommendations of the HLP's report on Internal Displacement and the SG's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

The research and consultations undertaken in the context of the development of the national Durable Solutions Strategy and the Collective Outcome on Durable Solutions have also led to a reconsideration of the numbers of IDPs in the country. Limited data is available on IDPs in Libya, with no government system in place for the registration of IDPs. The numbers of IDPs used by international actors in the context of Libya come from the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) across the country. According to IOM's DTM, an estimated 695,516 displaced persons had returned to their villages/communities of origin as of August 2022, while some 134,787 people remained displaced within Libya.<sup>13</sup> Based on IOM's data, IDMC's Global Internal Displacement Report included 160,000 IDPs in the global IDP stock for 2021.<sup>14</sup> Yet, it soon appeared that these figures present significant limitations and may not offer a precise picture of the situation. Getting the numbers of IDPs right has thus become a prime concern for both the Libyan government and the international community; it is an essential part of the implementation of both the national Durable Solutions and the Collective Outcome on durable solutions.

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<sup>11</sup> Few countries have a national durable solutions strategy. These include Ethiopia (for the Somali region more specifically), Iraq, Myanmar, and Somalia. Durable solution strategies have also been developed in Sudan and South Sudan but have not yet been adopted.

<sup>12</sup> The Collective Outcome on Durable Solutions is part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2025.

<sup>13</sup> IOM Libya, *IDP and Returnee report, Round 43 July-August 2022*, available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/libya>.

<sup>14</sup> IDMC, *GRID 2022*.

## *2.2 Key limitations of IDP data for the purpose of durable solutions in Libya*

Unlike many other contexts, internal displacement in Libya is essentially an urban phenomenon, with the large majority of the IDPs having moved to the main urban centers such as Tripoli, Benghazi and Misrata. According to IOM, 90 per cent of the IDPs in Libya live in self-paid rented accommodation or are staying with host families without paying rent, with the remaining 10 per cent reportedly living in informal settlements.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, freedom of movement is not an issue for IDPs in Libya; there are no legal or policy obstacles preventing displaced persons from moving across the country and settling down wherever they want. Increasing evidence in fact indicates that many displaced persons are unwilling to return to their areas of origin and that they have locally integrated in the cities where they have access to better services and economic opportunities. Yet the importance of local integration as a durable solution has long been overlooked in the context of Libya, where the current narrative on internal displacement places a strong emphasis on the return of IDPs to their places of origin as the only durable solution.

Against this background, two key issues emerged during the process leading to the development of the national Durable Solutions Strategy and to the Collective Outcome on Durable Solutions that have a significant impact on the way IDPs are counted. The first was the realization that there was no common understanding of the key concepts and notions such as “IDPs” and “durable solutions” among key stakeholders in Libya. The second is the absence of a system to measure the attainment of durable solutions and determine whether people should continue to be considered as IDPs. In the absence of such a system, IDPs remain considered as such as long as they do not return to their areas of origin, irrespective of the fact that they may have overcome key displacement-related vulnerabilities in the areas where they live. The result of this situation is an increasing discrepancy between the number of IDPs being reported in the context of Libya, and the reality on the ground with more people achieving a durable solution.

## **3. A shared understanding of “IDPs” and “durable solutions”**

A critical and yet often overlooked aspect of the work on durable solutions in a specific country is the need to ensure that all relevant stakeholders, including the authorities at all levels, UN agencies, INGOs, civil society organizations, donors and other actors, have a common understanding of the definition of “IDPs”. One of the objectives of the national Durable Solutions Strategy is precisely to “facilitat[e] a common understanding among stakeholders on notions, concepts, principles, and priority areas of action”. As the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons, and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS) noted, the use of “clear and unambiguous” concepts and definition is indeed “an important precondition for achieving comparable quality statistics”.<sup>16</sup> The starting point when discussing notions and concepts related to IDPs and durable solutions is the international policy framework for the protection of IDPs.

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<sup>15</sup> IOM Libya, *IDP and Returnee Report, Round 41 February-April 2022*.

<sup>16</sup> EGRISS, *Technical Report on Statistics of Internally Displaced Persons*, p. 25.

### 3.1 Defining IDPs in the context of Libya

Determining whether a person is or is not internally displaced person is the first step toward the collection of IDP statistics. IDPs are defined in the UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid, the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, and/or violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border”.<sup>17</sup>

While it was agreed that this definition would be used in the context of Libya, many questions arose during the consultations regarding for instance whether the definition covered specific groups of people, such as persons displaced because of the effect of climate change, e.g., in the case of desertification and increasing pressure on livelihood, or in the case of people who have been living in Libya for many years, sometimes for generations, but for various reasons have been deprived of nationality. There were questions also regarding the inclusion of people moving within Libya for primarily economic reasons, yet with a degree of coercion insofar as their movements were prompted by extreme poverty. These are issues of interpretation of the definition of an IDP and it is essential to ensure that there is a common understanding of the scope of the definition applied in a specific country; however, it also has to do with translating some of the concepts and notions used in a specific policy field into a vernacular language. For instance, various terms may be used in Arabic to refer to IDPs, which carry different meanings and might cover different situations, including people somehow compelled to move due to extreme poverty.<sup>18</sup> In such situations, it is important to listen to the IDPs themselves to understand how they qualify/consider themselves.

### 3.2 Moving beyond return as the only durable solution for IDPs

The discussions in Libya also highlighted the need to reach a shared understanding of what is meant by “durable solutions” in the context of internal displacement. “Durable solutions” is a term of art, and while policies and guidance do exist, such as the UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*,<sup>19</sup> experience shows that these documents, including the definition of durable solutions proposed in the IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions*, are not necessarily known and understood the same way by different actors (not to mention the increasing use of other terminology such as “transitional solutions” or “development solutions”, which essentially refer to the same thing but from a different standpoint).

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<sup>17</sup> See UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*; See also African Union *Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa* (Kampala Convention), Article I.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, both the words *Nazihin*, which refers to people who have moved to another location, and the word *Mohadjarin*, which refers to people who have been forcibly evicted from their places have been used to refer to IDPs in Libya. The term *Mosharadin*, which means “homeless”, has also been used.

<sup>19</sup> IASC, *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, 2010, available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons#:~:text=IASC%20Framework%20on%20Durable%20Solutions%20for%20Internally%20Displaced%20Persons%2C%20April%202010.pdf>.



The UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* identifies three durable solutions, namely return to the areas/communities of origin, local integration and resettlement.<sup>20</sup> In many countries, however, including in Libya, return to the areas or communities of origin is considered as the main, if not the only, durable solution to internal displacement. Recognizing the fact that many IDPs in Libya may have rebuilt their lives in the areas where they have settled, the national Durable Solutions Strategy broadens the scope of durable solutions in the country as per the international standards to also consider local integration and resettlement alongside the safe and voluntary return to places of origin. Yet doing so is likely to have an impact on the number of displaced persons, since the way IDPs are currently recorded in Libya does not take into account the possibility that some of them may have found a durable solution by way of integration into a new community (even though the concerned persons may continue to consider themselves as IDPs).

Confusion also exists as to what level of support should be provided to IDPs as part of durable solutions programming (as opposed to humanitarian/development programming for instance). According to the IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions*, a durable solution “is achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement”.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the objective is not to address all the needs and vulnerabilities displaced persons may have, but to focus specifically on the so-called “displacement-related” needs and vulnerabilities, i.e., those arising from the fact they have been displaced. Displacement-related specific needs relate to, for example, houses that have been damaged or destroyed; destruction of infrastructure due to armed conflict; lack of income and livelihood opportunities because people have been displaced; loss of documentation which may limit access to some services; and the risk associated with the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance. People who have overcome the key displacement-related needs and vulnerabilities should no longer be considered as IDPs and removed from the IDP community; however, they may still face needs or human rights concerns that are not displacement-specific and that may require interventions by humanitarian, development, or human rights actors.<sup>22</sup>

Broadening the definition of an IDP to include integration in a new community and defining durable solutions as a long process of gradually diminishing the displacement-related needs challenge the distinction that is often made between the two categories of “IDPs” and “returnees”, as is the case in the context of Libya. This distinction is problematic insofar as it implies that returnees have achieved a durable solution because they moved back to their areas or communities of origin, irrespective of the fact they may still have displacement-related needs. By way of example, the *Global Report on Internal Displacement* published by IDMC only considers the number of “IDPs” provided for by IOM in Libya, without any mention of the “returnees”.

Yet, it is generally agreed that mere return of IDPs to their areas/communities of origin does not constitute in itself a durable solution.<sup>23</sup> As noted above, a more relevant criteria to determine if people are IDPs or not, as established by the IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions*, is whether

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<sup>20</sup> UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, Principle 28.

<sup>21</sup> IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions*.

<sup>22</sup> IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions*.

<sup>23</sup> IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions*.



the concerned persons still have specific needs related to their displacement. In principle, in the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the needs of IDPs along the criteria set out in the IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions*, returnees should be presumed to have displacement-related needs. The *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics* (IRIS) developed by the EGRIS in March 2020 recommends considering returnees who have not yet overcome displacement-related vulnerabilities as a sub-category of IDPs until they are found to have achieved a durable solution.<sup>24</sup> This approach aims at ensuring that governments cannot claim to have resolved internal displacement by only returning IDPs to their areas of origin.

There are some issues with this approach in the context of Libya, though. Including returnees in the IDP community in Libya would lead to a significant increase in the number of IDPs reported in the country – from 135,000 people (excluding “returnees”), according to IOM’s DTM data, to 830,00 people (including “returnees”); that is, around 12 per cent of the Libyan population. Yet, as a tool to track and monitor movements, IOM’s DTM considers the movement of people from a “mobility” perspective, meaning that the figures it provides include all the returns that have taken place over the past decade without considering whether any of the concerned people have achieved a durable solution or not. This includes a large number of people who were displaced and returned of their own volition years ago, and who have not made any claims since then regarding any potential remaining displacement-related needs. Considering all the so-called returnees identified by IOM’s DTM *a priori* as IDPs for the purpose of finding durable solutions may thus not be appropriate. It is clear also that this approach would not correspond to the reality of internal displacement in a country where humanitarian needs have significantly decreased over the past two years, as reflected in the latest iteration of the Humanitarian Response Plan for Libya.<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, there is a general agreement among all stakeholders in the country that the number of displaced persons in Libya is already inflated, since many displaced people may have already achieved a durable solution by way of local integration and yet they remain part of the total number of IDPs in the IOM’s DTM. To address this issue, the Libya national Durable Solutions Strategy and the Collective Outcome on Durable Solutions cover those who have not yet reached a durable solution, while paying attention to the impacts of displacement on host communities and other crisis-affected communities. At the same time, both frameworks emphasize the importance of a multi-sectoral needs assessment to identify the remaining needs of IDPs and returnees.

#### 4. Measuring the attainment of durable solutions

Once an agreement has been reached on the definition of an IDP and the definition of durable solutions taking into account the specificities of the context, another key issue is to put in place a

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<sup>24</sup> See EGRIS, *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics*. There are some recent cases in Libya where returnees seem to be in a more precarious situation than IDPs and host or receiving communities due to the fact that they were displaced. See for instance Norwegian Refugee Council Libya, *Rapid Needs Assessment of Returnees to Tawergha*, December 2021, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/nrc-libya-rapid-needs-assessment-returnees-tawergha-december-2021#:~:text=Download%20Report.PDF%20%7C%20528.39%20KB>).

<sup>25</sup> Libya, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 Review*, June 2022, [https://reliefweb.int/attachments/4c12fdb2-22f6-4db7-b8a9-fd9a664c1d3f/libya\\_hrp2022\\_review\\_jan\\_dec2022.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/attachments/4c12fdb2-22f6-4db7-b8a9-fd9a664c1d3f/libya_hrp2022_review_jan_dec2022.pdf).

system to measure the extent to which displaced persons -and returnees, for that matter- have overcome key displacement-related vulnerabilities. Measuring the attainment of durable solutions is necessary for the purpose of identifying the remaining displacement-related needs of IDPs. As Mooney noted, this question “is not simply an academic or theoretical exercise”: it can have “a tremendous impact on lives of IDPs and respect for their rights” since it determines when they would no longer be entitled to assistance and support provided to them in relation to the fact they were displaced.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.1 *The fundamental question: when does displacement ends?*

Yet answering the question of when displacement ends is also essential to determine, in line with the international standards, whom among those registered as IDPs and returnees should no longer be counted as IDPs/returnees. Without clear criteria to determine whether a durable solution has been achieved, as is the case in Libya, the number of IDPs and returnees reported by IOM’s DTM would essentially remain the same; people would be considered as IDPs/returnees for an indefinite period of time and irrespective of the fact they have achieved a durable solution. Those who return to their areas of origin would move from one category to another and be given a different label, while those remaining outside their areas of origin may well be considered as being in a protracted displacement situation after some time. In the meantime, they may continue to receive some form of humanitarian assistance provided to IDPs even though they may have achieved a durable solution. This situation is unsustainable in a global context where a large part of humanitarian needs remains unmet.<sup>27</sup>

The question as to “when does displacement end” is nothing new; and yet the answer remains elusive. The definition of an IDP provided for in the UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* does not offer much clarity as to the end of internal displacement; it merely stipulates “displacement shall last no longer than required by the circumstances”.<sup>28</sup> Scholars paid considerable attention in the early 2000s to the issue and the criteria to be applied as the number of IDPs worldwide kept growing.<sup>29</sup> This led to the development of the IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions* in 2010, which identifies a set of criteria that should be considered to determine if durable solutions have been achieved for IDPs. In practice, however, “operationalizing these eight criteria in statistical terms and concretely measuring if and when a durable solution has been achieved is complex and practice has varied significantly”.<sup>30</sup> Some countries remove people from the total number of IDPs in the country (also referred to as the

<sup>26</sup> Erin Mooney, “Bringing the end into sight for internally displaced persons”, *Forced Migration Review* 17, May 2003, pp. 4-7.

<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that only 60% of humanitarian appeals have been financed since 2010. See Gary Milante and Jannie Lilja, “Chronic Crisis Financing? Fifty Years of Humanitarian Aid and Future Prospects”, *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security*, No. 2022/5, April 2022, p. 3, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/chronic-crisis-financing-fifty-years-humanitarian-aid-and-future-prospects#:~:text=Download%20Report.PDF%20%7C%20660.77%20KB>.

<sup>28</sup> UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, Principle 6.3.

<sup>29</sup> See for instance the Issue 17 of the *Forced Migration Review* focusing on “When does internal displacement ends?”, May 2003, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/forced-migration-review-no-17-when-does-internal-displacement-end>; The Brookings Institution – University of Bern, *When displacement ends. A Framework for Durable Solutions*, June 2007, available at: [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2007\\_durablesolutions.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2007_durablesolutions.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> EGRIS, *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics*, para. 126.

IDP “stock”, as opposed to the IDP “flow”)<sup>31</sup> after a certain period of time or as soon as they leave the camps or return to their areas/communities of origin, while others, at the opposite end of the spectrum, resort to extensive vulnerability analysis. The lack of agreement on when an IDP should stop being counted as a displaced person and the varying practice of states and international actors in this regard represent one of the main obstacles to the development of a harmonized statistical framework at the global level.

Some guidance and tools have been developed over the years to facilitate the operationalization of the *Framework on Durable Solutions* and support efforts to monitor the attainment of durable solutions.<sup>32</sup> These include the publication of the *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics* by the EGRIS in March 2020.<sup>33</sup> Yet, while calling for a “more standardized approach” to the measurement of progress made towards durable solutions, the IRIS does provide more clarity as to the indicators that should be used for the purpose of measuring durable solutions due to a lack of agreement on this issue between members of the group. What the IRIS confirms, however, is that a comparison between the situation of IDPs and non-displaced populations for the purpose of identifying the needs and vulnerabilities that are specifically linked to displacement and measuring the extent to which these needs and vulnerabilities have been addressed has become a key part of the approach to measure the attainment of durable solutions.<sup>34</sup>

Now that a comprehensive policy framework on durable solutions has been adopted in Libya, including an agreement on the key definitions, one of the priority areas is to develop a tool to measure the attainment of durable solutions. In the absence of a standardized methodology for that purpose, a specific approach will have to be developed by relevant actors in Libya based on the available guidance and adapted to the Libyan context. While the national Durable Solutions Strategy acknowledges the government of Libya’s required leadership on IDP data collection and analysis, this is a medium-term objective, with the conversation already going on among international partners.

#### 4.2 First steps towards the measurement of durable solutions for IDPs in Libya

An important step on the journey toward the development of a system to measure the attainment of durable solutions in Libya was taken in October 2022 with the organization of a Workshop on IDP and Durable Solutions Data in Tunis, which brought together key UN Agencies and INGOs that are collecting data and information on IDPs in Libya, including IOM, UNHCR and REACH. Examples from other countries regarding the monitoring of durable solutions were also discussed to see how they can inspire the work in Libya.<sup>35</sup> The main objective of the workshop was to provide participants with a common understanding of the limitations, gaps but also opportunities

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<sup>31</sup> EGRIS, *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics*, p. 33-35

<sup>32</sup> See above, note 9. The *Interagency Indicator Library* and the *Durable Solutions Analysis Guide* provide a broad range of indicators to monitor the attainment of durable solutions based on the eight criteria identified by the IASC Framework.

<sup>33</sup> See above, note 24.

<sup>34</sup> JIPS, *Durable Solutions Analysis Guide*, p. 26. See also EGRIS, *International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics*, pp. 41-55

<sup>35</sup> This included examples from East Africa based on the experience of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDDS).

in terms of collecting data and information on IDPs with a view to informing durable solutions programming.

The workshop was seen as a necessary step to ensure the buy-in of relevant international actors and potentially lay the ground for a follow up conversation on a set of concrete indicators to contextualize and operationalize the criteria set forth in the IASC *Framework on Durable Solutions* in a way that reflect the specificities of internal displacement in Libya. This includes measuring durable solutions both in the areas of origin and in the other locations where IDPs have settled so as to take into consideration the fact that many IDPs may have already integrated. Yet, as is the case at the global level, developing a framework for the monitoring of durable solutions at country level requires reaching an agreement on the indicators – and more broadly on the methodology - among a broad range of actors with different and sometimes conflicting views, priorities, and interests. It also requires adapting some of the existing tools to facilitate the collection of relevant data while ensuring their complementarity and interoperability to the extent possible.

Moreover, far from being a technical issue, any attempt to monitor the achievement of durable solutions also has political and economic dimensions that would need to be considered. For instance, a reduction in the number of IDPs in a country may potentially have an impact on the funding that is made available to certain organizations, and as such efforts in that direction would need to be discussed and planned well in advance. Most importantly, any decision to no longer consider an individual an IDP based on “objective” criteria, namely the evidence that the concerned persons have overcome key displacement-related vulnerabilities based on a comparison with the situation of host or receiving communities, would have to be properly communicated and explained to the concerned persons, in line with the principle of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). Yet this decision may be met with resistance from IDPs communities, not only because it might have an impact on their entitlements and the level of assistance they receive, but also because it may directly contradict their personal experience as displaced persons. Finding the appropriate balance between the “objective” approach and the “subjective” approach to the measurement of durable solutions might prove challenging. These are but a few of the important questions that need to be addressed when working on the development of a tool to measure the attainment of durable solutions.

## 5. Conclusion

More countries and United Nations Country Teams are being called on to advance durable solutions for IDPs following the publication of the HLP’s report and the SG’s Action Agenda as well as the appointment of a new Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement (whose role is precisely to galvanize support for the resolution of internal displacement).<sup>36</sup> In this context, collecting more accurate and, as far as possible, comparable data on IDPs is deemed a priority to inform the development of effective programs and policies, and yet the way is fraught with problems.

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<sup>36</sup> The Secretary General announced in May 2022 the appointment of Robert Andrew Piper of Australia as Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement. See <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sga2116.doc.htm>.

As the case of Libya illustrates, a significant impediment to diligent IDP reporting is that countries and relevant actors in the same country do not share the same understanding of key concepts and notions such as IDPs and durable solutions. The development of a national Durable Solutions Strategy and a Collective Outcome on Durable Solutions in Libya has been key to ensure that all relevant stakeholders, including the authorities, share the same understanding of what durable solutions are for IDPs. The Strategy and the Collective Outcome allowed for a contextualized approach to durable solutions while ensuring the proposed approach is aligned with international standards.

Moving toward implementation of the new framework in place in Libya to support the resolution of internal displacement, one of the next steps is to put in place a system to measure the attainment of durable solutions. This is critical both for ensuring that programs are designed to respond effectively to the needs of IDPs and to remove from the total number those whose key displacement-related needs and vulnerabilities have been overcome. Many countries have been having the same conversation on the need to monitor durable solutions, and yet there is still limited guidance in this regard and very few concrete examples of relevant approaches upon which to build. Strengthening the capacities of the United Nations and of the concerned governments to measure the attainment of durable solutions is a key part of the implementation of the HLP's report and the SG's Action Agenda moving forward. In view of a national Durable Solutions Strategy and a Collective Outcome on Durable Solutions, Libya may provide a test case for the development of innovative approaches aimed at measuring durable solutions in line with existing guidance.

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