

# Optional Module: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

A module developed

by

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

**iDMC** internal  
displacement  
monitoring  
centre



# Objectives

- Outline the key components of the IDP definition;
- Distinguish between the description of an IDP and the definition of a refugee;
- Outline who has a role and responsibility in relation to the protection of IDPs;
- Describe how the Guiding Principles can be used as a framework for protection.

# IDPs outnumber refugees

<b>Year</b>	<b>Refugees</b>	<b>IDPs</b>
1970	9 million	5 million
1980	14 million	9 million
2000	16 million	22-25 million
2004	13.2 million	25 million

*Sources: UNHCR website for refugee figures and NRC/Global IDP Project for IDP figures*

**Who is an  
internally displaced person?**



## The UN definition

“Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid **the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters**, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.”

# A special vulnerability

- **May be forced towards unhealthy or inhospitable environments;**
- **Social organisation destroyed or damaged;**
- **May experience profound psychological distress;**
- **Removed from sources of income and livelihood;**
- **Schooling disrupted;**
- **May lack identity documents;**
- **Lack of access for international organisations.**

# Comparison: The Refugee and IDP «definitions»

## Refugees

- Have crossed an international border;
- Have lost the protection of their own country;
- Have a special status under international law.

## IDPs

- Are displaced within their own country;
- Causes of flight: violence, war, human rights violations, disasters;
- Country still in charge of their protection;
- Do not have a special status under international law but should enjoy same rights as other citizens.

**Who is responsible?**

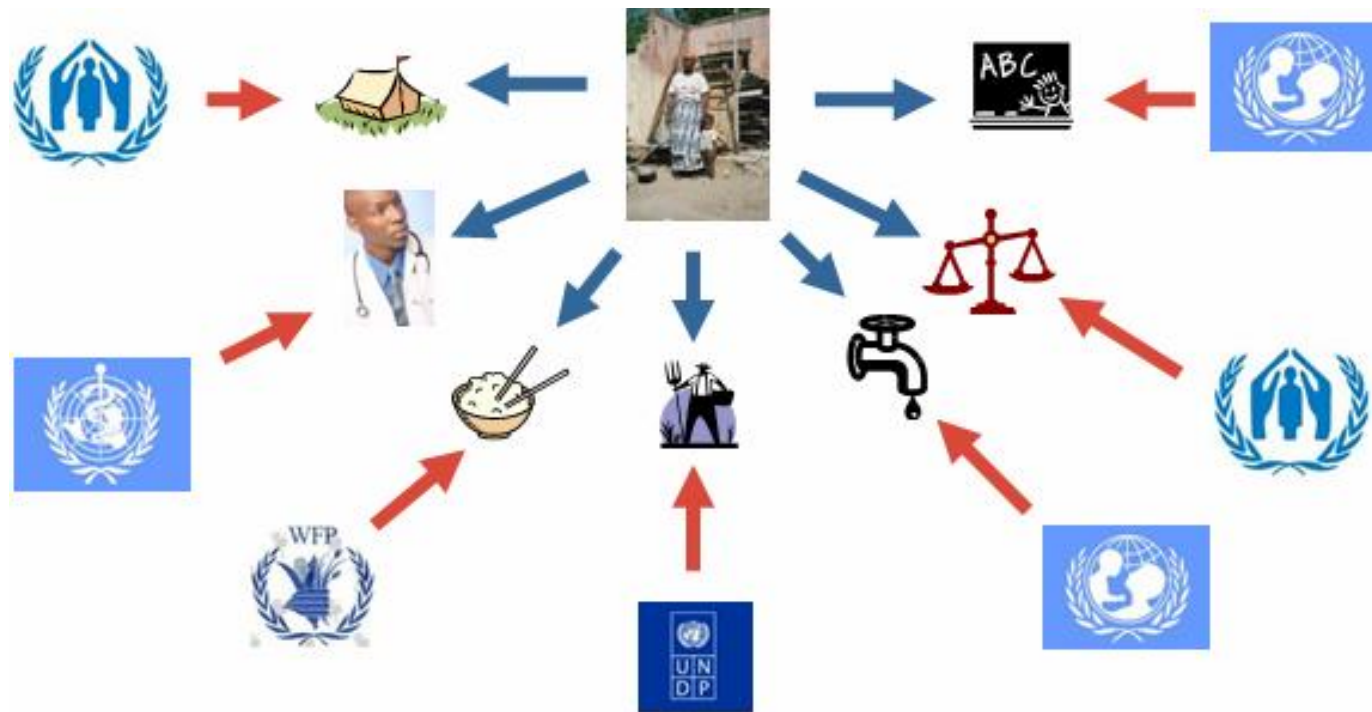




## **Guiding Principle 3**

**"National authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDPs within their jurisdiction."**

# IDPs have cross-cutting needs



**A collaborative response is required**

# The role of the UNHCR

- **UNHCR has a predisposition to protect IDPs;**
- **The UNHCR mandate does not include those who have fled from natural or man-made disasters;**
- **In 2004, only 5.4 million IDPs were of concern to the UNHCR out of a total of 25 million IDPs worldwide;**
- **UNHCR leads protection effort of UN Country Team as part of collaborative response.**

# Comparison: The protection regime for refugees and IDPs

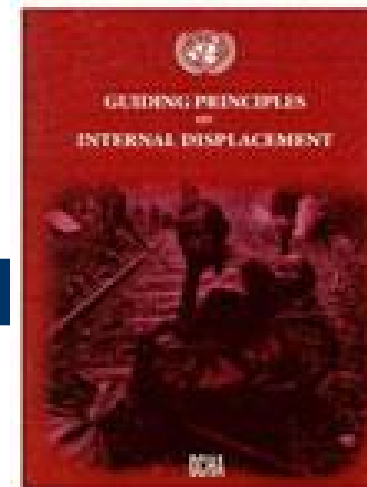
## Refugees

- State authorities in host country;
- The UNHCR has a global mandate for refugees worldwide.

## IDPs

- National state authorities;
- Collaborative response under the leadership of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator;
- IDPs of concern to the UNHCR in some countries only.

# The Guiding Principles (GP)



# The Guiding Principles - objectives

- Identify the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of the internally displaced in all phases of displacement;
- Not binding - but derived from binding international law;
- Provide guidance to **all** actors dealing with IDPs, including national and international actors.

# The Guiding Principles - content

## Content:

- Introduction - Scope and Purpose

## Principles relating to:

- Section I - General Principles
- Section II - Protection from displacement
- Section III - Protection during displacement

## **IDPS have the right to seek asylum (GP 15)!**

- Section IV - Humanitarian assistance
- Section V - Return, resettlement and reintegration

# Comparison: The legal framework for refugees and IDPs

## Refugees

- The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol,
  - Creates a specific legal regime for those in need of international protection;
- Human rights law;
- International humanitarian law.

## IDPs

- Human rights law;
- International humanitarian law;
- Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement,
  - Restate international legal standards that are relevant to the specific needs of IDPs
  - Refugee law by analogy.



# Conclusions

- **Guiding Principles restate the rights of IDPs and duties of responsibilities;**
- **They are consistent with international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law by analogy;**
- **States have increasingly used the GP as a reference tool.**

**This module on IDPs was developed by  
the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**

To find out more about their training materials and resources on IDPs by country (database), please visit:

**[www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)**

