

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this study, *From Responsibility to Response: Assessing National Approaches to Internal Displacement*. National responsibility is fundamental to ensuring an effective approach to internal displacement. The simple fact that internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain within the borders of their country means that it is their own government that bears primary responsibility for protecting and assisting them and for safeguarding populations from arbitrary displacement in the first place.

The central role of national authorities in addressing internal displacement has been affirmed in international law, in UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council resolutions, in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, in regional legal instruments such as the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons, and in many national laws and policies. Indeed, governments regularly insist that it is their responsibility to protect and assist those displaced within their countries' borders. Moreover, the concept of "sovereignty as responsibility" was the foundation for the development of the concept of "Responsibility to Protect," which also places strong emphasis, first and foremost, on the role of national governments in protecting their own populations.

The question of what it means for a government to exercise its responsibility for IDPs is a relevant and timely one. This study is based on a publication developed in 2005 by the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement: *Addressing Internal Displacement: A Framework for National Responsibility*, which suggests twelve benchmarks for governments to use as a guide to develop effective national policies for preventing, responding to and resolving internal displacement situations. This framework, developed by Erin Mooney, one of the coauthors of this study, has been widely used by governments, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and civil society groups to encourage governments to develop appropriate laws, policies and institutional responses regarding IDPs and to monitor their actual response.

This study goes beyond simply recommending steps that governments should take to protect and assist IDPs by examining whether they are doing so in practice. It uses the Framework as a tool for assessing the extent to which fifteen governments in countries experiencing large-scale internal displacement are exercising their national responsibility along each of the twelve benchmarks. The detailed research indicates the ways in which governments have—and have not—exercised the responsibility entrusted to them by international law and the international community and thereby seeks to strengthen governments' accountability to IDPs.

This is an important study that will be helpful to me in carrying out my mandate to support the efforts of governments to protect and assist those displaced within their borders. The study should also be of interest to governments of countries with large numbers of IDPs or of those in which displacement is a risk. Governments can see how other governments have dealt with similar challenges, such as preventing displacement, collecting data on IDPs or supporting durable solutions. Civil society groups, UN agencies, human rights organizations, humanitarian actors and donor governments can use this study as a tool to help governments to do the right thing for IDPs.

I hope that this report is widely read, discussed, and acted upon.

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