

# The Collaborative Response

by Marc Vincent and Simon Bagshaw

*UN agencies and other humanitarian organisations recently reiterated their commitment to the collaborative response and have been developing practical tools to assist its implementation.*

IDPs, unlike refugees, are not represented by a single UN agency. The option of creating an agency solely dedicated to the protection, assistance and recovery needs of IDPs has often been debated. However, given the sheer magnitude, scope and nature of internal displacement (some 25 million in 52 countries), it has been recognised that an effective and comprehensive response to their needs is beyond the capacity of any single UN agency.

The UN has therefore opted for a collaborative response. This involves a broad range of UN and non-UN, governmental and non-governmental actors working – within their individual mandates and using their particular expertise – in a transparent and co-operative manner to respond to the needs of IDPs.

The collaborative response requires:

- effective leadership and the field presence of actors with the necessary expertise, capacity and resources to respond to the different needs of the displaced
- structures in place to ensure effective communication and transparent decision making
- adequate resources to guarantee a comprehensive response (emergency as well as longer-term solutions and recovery needs), avoiding gaps and overlaps, and providing clear lines of responsibility and accountability
- consideration of the broader humanitarian context and the need to respond to the protection and assistance needs of other vulnerable individuals, groups and communities.

In 2003, two initiatives undertaken by the Internal Displacement Unit (now re-named the Inter-Agency Internal Displacement Division) – the Protection Survey<sup>1</sup> and the Response Matrix – found significant problems

in the implementation of the collaborative response.<sup>2</sup>

They identified the need for increased accountability among the UN's Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators (HCs and/or RCs) who are charged with the overall coordination of the UN's response to crises of internal displacement, as well as among the different operational agencies involved. The approach of country teams to assessment and strategy making needed to be im-

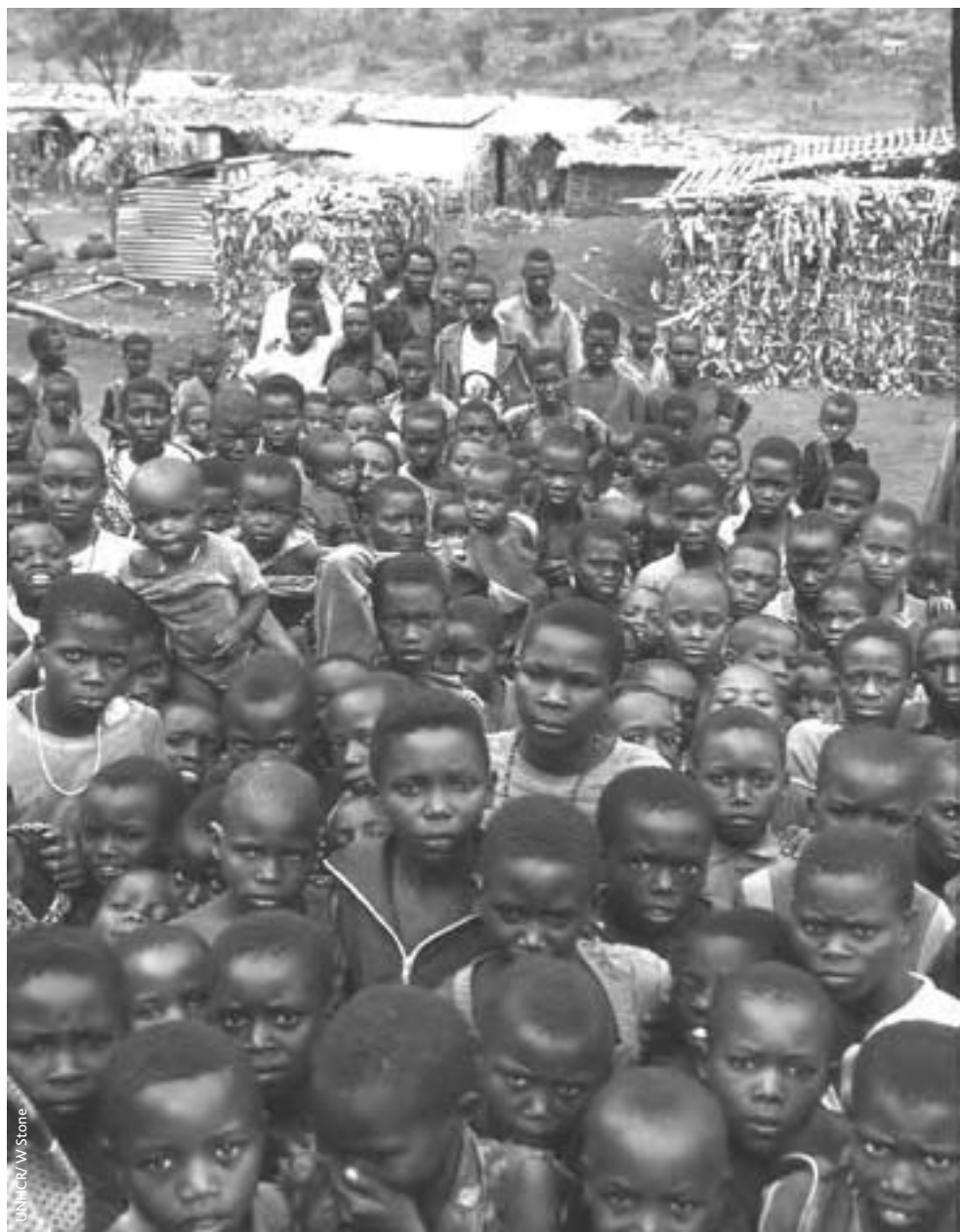
proved, and the decision-making process within country teams leading to a division of labour needed to be made more transparent and predictable.

In response, a set of practical tools has been developed to address these problems.

## IASC Policy Package

Specifically, the Inter-Agency Internal Displacement Division and the Senior Network on Internal Displacement developed the IASC Policy Package, which was endorsed by the IASC Working Group in September 2004.<sup>3</sup> It comprises the following elements:

*IDPs in internment camp, Gihogozi area, Burundi.*



- a revised and updated Guidance Note to Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators and Country Teams, outlining the roles and responsibilities of different headquarters and field-based actors
- a one-page, step-by-step Procedural Roadmap on implementing the collaborative response
- a Strategy Checklist to help the HC and/or RC and Country Team develop an Action Plan to respond to the protection and assistance needs of IDPs
- an Activities List outlining the potential roles/tasks of different UN and non-UN actors during a given phase of the displacement crisis
- guidance on the nature and meaning of protection for IDPs
- an overview of the different types of capacity building and training, strategy development and advocacy support available to HCs and/or RCs and Country Teams from the Internal Displacement Division, the Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project, and the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs.

### *effective implementation is key*

An important feature of the Policy Package is the emphasis placed on protection of IDPs. The Guidance Note underlines the fact that the protection of IDPs must be of concern to all UN agencies and that all humanitarian and development agencies have a responsibility to assess and analyse IDP needs and to act when their rights are violated.

The Strategy Checklist aims to ensure that protection issues are taken into account in the Action Plan, including by ensuring that the Plan provides for the establishment of a system for monitoring and reporting on human rights and humanitarian law. This should provide the basis for advocacy efforts, both within the country and by external actors such as the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs.

### **Implementation**

As with all policy, effective implementation is key. The Policy Package has been sent by the ERC to all HCs and/or RCs with a request that they

convene a meeting of the County Team to discuss the package and its implementation in their particular country. All Country Teams in countries experiencing internal displacement should have in place a comprehensive strategic action plan for meeting the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced. If this is not yet the case, or if a new displacement situation develops or changes significantly, the steps outlined in the roadmap should be followed in a timely manner.

The ERC also shared the Policy Package with the IASC Principals – the executive heads of the various UN and other major human rights, humanitarian and development agencies – and requested that they disseminate it as widely as possible within their respective organisations and ensure that its key aspects are incorporated into relevant policy documents, training materials and activities.

The Internal Displacement Division is planning a series of regional workshops on the Policy Package for OCHA Heads of Field Offices in order to support HCs and/or RCs with its implementation. The Division will also ensure that key elements of the package are integrated into a forthcoming training programme for HCs being organised by OCHA.

The Division will also directly promote and facilitate the implementation of the policy package at the field level. During its mission to Liberia in October 2004, for example, the Division assisted the country team in

developing an action plan for the return and reintegration of IDPs. Similar initiatives will be pursued in the Division's other priority countries as required.

### **Making it happen**

The Policy Package represents more than just a clarification of the process for implementing the collaborative response. Its development was characterised by a level of cooperation and understanding among the different UN and non-UN actors involved that reflects a genuine commitment to making the collaborative response work and to ensuring a more effective and timely response to meeting the protection and assistance needs of IDPs. The challenge now is to ensure that this commitment translates into reality on the ground.

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1. In collaboration with the Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement.
2. The report of the *Protection Survey* was published by the Brookings-SAIS Project (now known as the Brookings-Bern Project) in November 2004 under the title *Protect or Neglect? Towards a More Effective United Nations Approach to the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons* (see p63). The report is available on-line at [www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/protection\\_survey.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/protection_survey.htm). The report of the *Response Matrix* is available on the website of the Division at [www.reliefweb.int/idp/docs/references/IDPMatrixPre10Oct03.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/idp/docs/references/IDPMatrixPre10Oct03.pdf)
3. Available at the Division's website: [www.reliefweb.int/idp/docs/references/Policypack31104.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/idp/docs/references/Policypack31104.pdf)

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