

# International Detention Coalition Theory of Change

JANUARY 2023

International  
**Detention** Coalition  
Rights and dignity for all who migrate



This document provides an overview of IDC's Theory of Change, describing what IDC believes needs to happen to end immigration detention and the work that IDC does to contribute to this goal. As a global organisation, IDC works in a range of different contexts to address specific local, national, regional and global opportunities and challenges. This Theory of Change provides an overarching strategic direction that brings together these different strands of work. It is a living document that will be reviewed and updated according to evolving realities.

## Our Vision

A world where immigration detention no longer exists and people who migrate live with rights and dignity.

## Our Mission

IDC advocates to secure the human rights of people impacted by and at risk of immigration detention. In partnership with civil society, UN agencies, and multiple levels of government, we strategically build movements, and influence law, policy and practices to end immigration detention, as well as implement rights-based ATD.

# Key Issues and Opportunities for Change

Immigration detention is an expanding global practice used by governments to control the movement of people across and within their borders. Immigration detention systems are rooted in xenophobia, racism, and other discriminatory beliefs, and contribute to the systemic criminalisation and exclusion of migrant communities.

Immigration detention is a flagrant human rights abuse that often has debilitating physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health impacts on individuals and communities, including women, girls, men, boys, gender diverse people, and people with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexualities, ages, abilities, languages, immigration statuses, cultures, and religions.

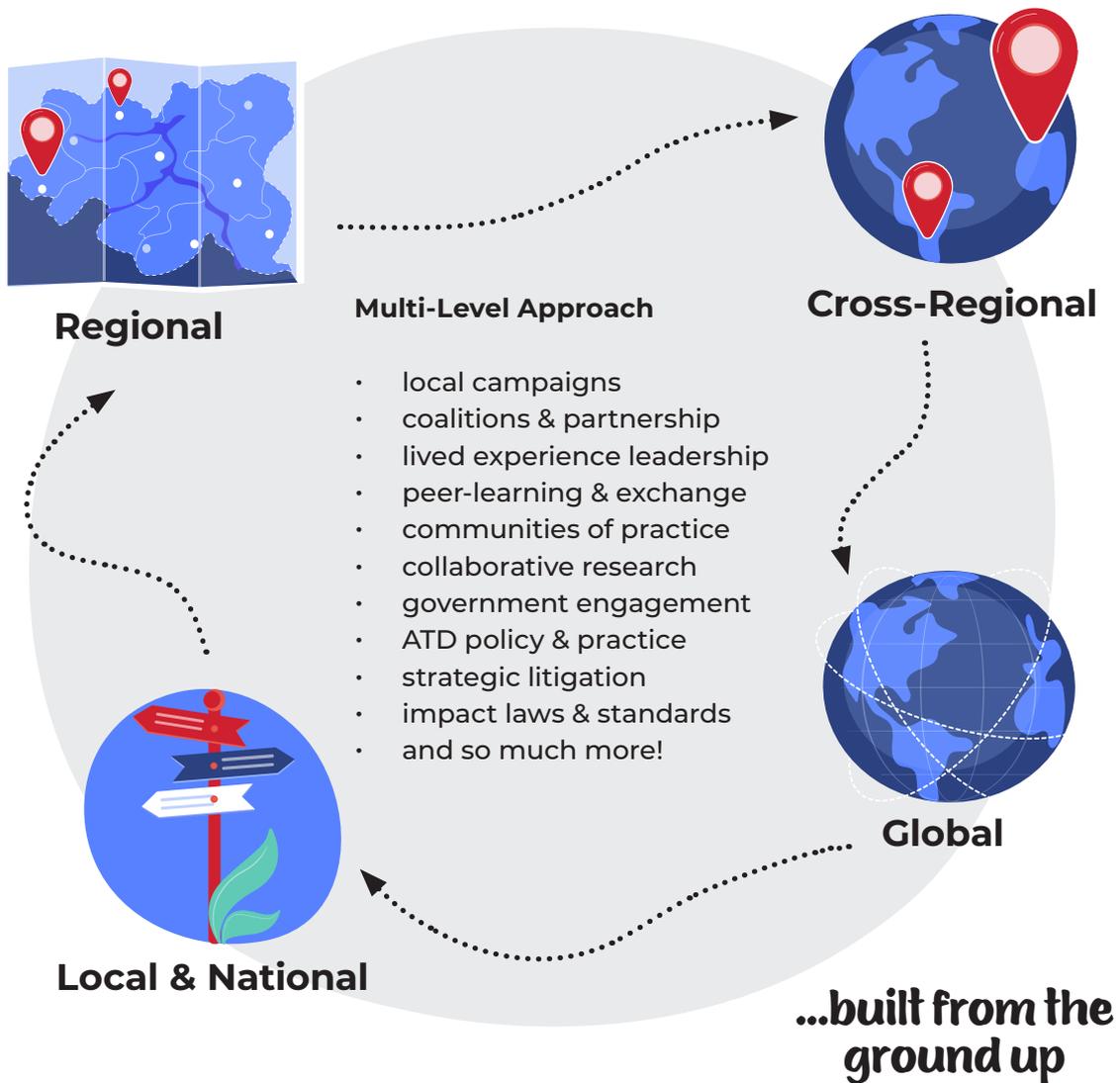
Evidence shows that immigration detention does not support effective or sustainable migration outcomes—it can inhibit the resolution of migration cases and it is vastly more expensive than alternatives.<sup>1</sup> Evidence shows that community-based and rights-based alternatives to detention (ATD) achieve better outcomes for individuals, communities, and governments, including improved health and wellbeing, cost effectiveness, and more successful engagement with the migration process.

<sup>1</sup> Sampson, R., Chew, V., Mitchell, G., and Bowring, L. *There Are Alternatives: A Handbook for Preventing Unnecessary Immigration Detention* (revised), International Detention Coalition, 2015. pp3-5; Various sources, cited in International Detention Coalition, *Gaining Ground: Promising practice to reduce and end immigration detention*, May 2022

# An Ecosystem for Creating Systems Change

Ending immigration detention requires long-term systemic change that can only be achieved through the concerted and coordinated efforts of a wide range of actors and sectors, leveraging different skills and using different approaches. As a membership coalition, IDC aims to be a connected global movement of organisations and people using a variety of strategies to end immigration detention. IDC believes that systems change requires stakeholders across all sectors to learn and improve together, and that the greatest learning takes place within and through relationships.

## A connected global MOVEMENT to end immigration detention...



# Ultimate Change Goal

Governments around the world do not detain people for reasons related to their migration status, and proactively protect their rights in the community

## What would this ultimate change goal look like?

- 1** Governments introduce laws and policies to prohibit immigration detention, and these are implemented effectively.

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- 2** Governments stop the use of immigration detention in practice.

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- 3** Governments increase the use of and improve models of rights-based ATD, including the allocation of sufficient resources.

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- 4** Laws and policies ensure that women, girls, men, boys and people with diverse genders, sexualities and bodies can live in the community and access essential services and support while their migration status is being resolved, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or any other aspect of their identity.

# 6 Change Pathways

Governments need to have sufficient political will and motivation, as well as capacity and resources, to change their laws, policies and practices.

## What would this change pathway look like?

### 1 Governments believe in the need to end immigration detention:

If government actors believe that ending immigration detention is in their interests, including believing that immigration detention is a political liability, or that rights-based ATD will meet their needs and interests better than immigration detention, they will be motivated to act.

### 2 Governments are pressured to change by multiple actors, including the public:

If governments face pressure to change their laws, policies and practices from a variety of actors, including the public, civil society, other governments, and international bodies, they will be more motivated to act.

### 3 Communities affected by immigration detention hold power and influence change that directly impacts their own lives:

If communities affected by immigration detention have more power, influence, access and involvement in shaping the policies and practices that directly impact their own lives and communities, then governments, civil society and other actors will be more motivated, and will have more insight into lived experiences of detention, as well as effective solutions that uphold the rights and interests of affected communities.

### 4 ATD are rights-based, gender-responsive, effective, evidenced, and recognised as good practice:

If strong and effective rights-based ATD models and programmes exist and there is evidence of their effectiveness, then governments will have greater awareness and confidence in ATD, advocacy by civil society, communities, and advocates with lived experience will be more influential, and good practices will be replicated and expanded.

### 5 Governments have knowledge of and confidence in rights-based ATD:

If government actors know that there are effective and viable models for community and rights-based migration management, and immigration detention is no longer seen as the default or preferred option, then they will be more likely to change their policies and practices.

### 6 Governments have the capacity and resources to end immigration detention:

If governments have the skills, knowledge and financial resources needed to change their laws, policies and practices to end immigration detention and implement rights-based ATD, then they will be more likely to act if and when they have the political will and motivation to do so.

**Note:** These change pathways are interrelated and interdependent.

# IDC's Core Approaches



## Taking a solutions-focused and evidence-based approach:

IDC drives transformative change through incremental, locally adapted, and pragmatic solutions to reduce and ultimately end immigration detention.

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## Ensuring that advocacy includes accountability to communities impacted by immigration detention by centering their leadership:

IDC strives to ensure that people who have experienced or are at risk of immigration detention have opportunities to lead, contribute to, and influence discussions and decision making, internally and externally, in meaningful ways.

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## Advancing intersectional and gender-responsive approaches:

IDC seeks to analyse and respond to the specific and layered impacts of immigration detention on people of all identities, including women, girls, men, boys, gender diverse people, and people with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexualities, ages, abilities, languages, immigration statuses, cultures and religions.

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## Connecting and convening stakeholders working at different levels and in different sectors:

IDC looks for opportunities to bring actors together, build relationships, develop shared priorities, facilitate sharing of resources, and align efforts to end immigration detention at local, national, regional and global levels.

# IDC's 3 Key Activity Areas

## 1 Strengthening the movement to end immigration detention and shifting power to the grassroots

- **Building and supporting the movement to end immigration detention:**

IDC strengthens the power and influence of the movement by connecting diverse actors, building common ground and shared perspectives, exchanging learnings and good practices, supporting their work, amplifying their leadership, and mobilising resources.

- **Supporting and strengthening civil society coalitions and organisations:**

IDC supports civil society actors and networks to become more effective and sustainable by providing capacity building and technical support, building communities of practice and facilitating peer learning, mobilising resources, coordinating strategy development, and collaborating on a wide range of issues and activities.

- **Practising accountability by supporting and partnering with people with lived experience, grassroots leaders, and migrant-led groups:**

IDC works to ensure our work is grounded in the experiences, perspectives, and leadership of people with lived experience. IDC supports people with lived experience with diverse identities and backgrounds to strengthen and exchange their skills and resources, build connections and networks, access spaces of influence, and have greater power in decision making and change processes.

## 2 Building support and commitment to end immigration detention

- **Building evidence and tools for change:**

IDC builds evidence and tools for change by supporting others to conduct research and evaluation, document good practices and lessons learned, develop findings that offer practical and targeted advice and guidance, and disseminate evidence and tools in accessible, usable ways.

- **Conducting targeted advocacy:**

IDC directly engages with governments, UN agencies, civil society and other actors to promote effective action and influence their priorities, decisions and actions at local, national, regional and global levels.

- **Public engagement and strategic communications:**

IDC uses public engagement and strategic communications to raise awareness and advocate to key stakeholders at key moments. IDC develops communications strategies for media and civil society advocates, and translates and adapts communications materials to ensure they are accessible, and culturally and contextually relevant.

### **3 Building expertise to end immigration detention and advance good practice**

- **Providing technical assistance and building government capacity:**

IDC builds relationships with government stakeholders at all levels and brings different agencies together to support whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to ending immigration detention. IDC provides advice, support and training, and shares information, guidance and tools about reforming laws, policies and practices to end detention, including implementing rights-based ATD.

- **Fostering peer learning and creating communities of practice:**

IDC facilitates peer learning and communities of practice among a variety of actors at local, national, regional and global levels to facilitate the sharing of ideas, experiences, knowledge, opportunities, challenges, and to foster support among governments and civil society, including ATD implementers, grassroots organisations, and communities affected by immigration detention.