

The Global Challenge of Internal Displacement

Keynote Address

By

Francis Mading Deng

Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

and

Representative of the UN Secretary-General

on Internally Displaced Persons

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I. Introductory Remarks

It is a great honor and privilege to have been invited to address this auspicious colloquium inaugurating an institute that promises to play a vital role in the development and promotion of global legal studies.

I do so with humility and in the realization that my only comparative advantage is to share with you reflections derived from my experience as the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons. This, of course, explains the title of my talk — The Global Challenge of Internal Displacement.

I would like to address the subject of internal displacement from the perspective of four thematic issues: the magnitude of the crisis, my conceptual approach to the mandate, the scope of activities I have undertaken pursuant to the mandate, and the need to address the root causes of internal displacement.

II. The Magnitude of the Crisis

When the Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali surprised me with a phone call in 1992, offering me the position of Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, I told him that while I was honored by his offer, I would appreciate getting more details on what would be required of me before responding. Boutros-Ghali, whom I had known as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Egypt when I was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, responded with moral authority, “Come on, Francis, I know how concerned you are with this problem,” he said. “It is not only a global crisis, but one from which our continent of Africa is the most affected and in Africa, your own country, the Sudan is the worst hit, and in the Sudan, your own people in the South are the victims. So, I don’t see how you can say ‘no.’ Let us say that you have accepted and if later you change your mind, we can discuss further.”

Boutros-Ghali was right. Internal displacement is a global crisis affecting some 20 to 25 million people in over 40 countries, literally in all regions of the world. And Africa, with half the world’s displaced populations in some 21 countries, is the worst hit.¹ The situation in Africa continues to worsen with every crisis that ensues. And in Africa, my own country, the Sudan, with 4 million internally displaced people is the most affected. And in the Sudan, the people of the South, a region which has been ravaged by a chronic civil war that has raged intermittently for over four decades, are the primary victims.² For me, therefore, this is not only a challenge to humankind the world over, it is a humanitarian and human rights tragedy that is close to home.

What is more, my experience with the work of the mandate has demonstrated to me that the crisis is more than statistical evidence shows. My country missions around the world reveal that there are real human beings with tragic faces behind those statistics. These are people uprooted and forced to flee from their homes and areas of normal residence as a

¹ *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*, by Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, Brookings Institution Press, 1998, pp. 40-46.

result of armed conflicts, communal violence, gross violations of human rights, and other man-made or natural disasters.³ Displacement deprives them of the basic necessities of life — shelter, food, medicine, education or employment opportunities, and are discriminated against where they reside. Their family and communal ties are shattered. And worse, they are oftentimes trapped within the zone of the very conflict which they seek to flee, forcing them to move again and again.

The tendency in the international community is to respond to the crisis with humanitarian relief assistance with little or no attention given to their protection. Internal displacement is indeed a humanitarian issue, but it is also a human rights concern. It is therefore critical that assistance be closely linked to protection, if we are to avoid the paradox of the “well fed dead.”⁴

While the internally displaced are particularly vulnerable with distinctive needs, they often represent a sample or a microcosm of the wider community affected by the conflict. Under certain circumstances, they may even fair better than the resident communities which have not escaped the looming threat of death and perpetual harassment by the warring parties or factions. The goal, therefore, must be to aim at comprehensive protection and assistance, while at the same time addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Even among the displaced populations, certain categories, notably children, women, the elderly, and the disabled, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the displaced, are more vulnerable and deserve special attention.

² *The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced*, edited by Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, Brookings Institution Press, 1998, pp. 139-174.

³ The working definition describes the internally displaced as "persons who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who are within the territory of their own country". See analytical report of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons (E/CN.4/1992/23), paragraph 17. For a preliminary discussion of definitional issues on the basis of this definition, see report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons (E/CN.4/1995/50), paragraphs 116-127. Further points for consideration and the rationale for refining the working definition appear in *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*, by Roberta Cohen and Francis Deng, Brookings Institution Press, 1998, chapter 2.

⁴ *Masses In Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*, by Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, Brookings Institution Press, 1998, p. 10.

Many of the displaced women become heads of household because men have gone to war, have been killed, have chosen to remain behind to protect their land and other properties, or have moved to areas where they can avoid recruitment into armed force, avoid arbitrary detention, or seek employment. Displaced populations, as a result, have among them disproportionate numbers of widows with children, as well as unaccompanied minors who have been separated from their guardians or whose guardians have been killed. And war itself cripples many fighting men who are then abandoned and left without care.⁵

III. Conceptual Approach to the Mandate

International approach to the crisis of internal displacement and the need for providing protection and assistance to the affected populations rests on the fundamental realization that the problem, by definition, is internal and therefore falls under state sovereignty. It was because of the need to be sensitive to the issue of sovereignty that the Commission on Human Rights decided in 1992 to appoint a Representative of the Secretary-General rather than the mechanism of Rapporteur or Working Group normally created for such thematic issues.⁶ Indeed, the first task assigned to me was to prepare a study with the view to advising the Commission whether this was an area in which the United Nations should be involved and, if so, through what mechanism. Bearing in mind both the sensitivity of the issue and the cross-cutting nature of the problem, which should involve humanitarian and development agencies, I recommended continuing with the mechanism of the Representative of the Secretary-General.⁷

In carrying out my work under the mandate, however, I approach sovereignty not as a negative concept by which states barricade themselves against international scrutiny and

⁵ Protecting Internally Displaced Women and Children, *Rights Have No Borders: Worldwide Internal Displacement*, Global IDP Survey of the Norwegian Refugee Council, 1998.

⁶ Resolution 1992/73 of the Commission on Human Rights.

⁷ E/CN.4/1993/35.

involvement, but rather as a positive concept entailing responsibility for the protection and general welfare of the citizens and all of those falling under state jurisdiction.⁸

Under normal circumstances, states are expected to, and do in fact, discharge those responsibilities. If they cannot discharge those responsibilities for lack of capacity or resources, they are expected to seek or at least welcome international co-operation to assist them. If, on the other hand, they fail to meet their obligations or to invite or welcome international assistance, and masses of their people suffer humanitarian and human rights tragedy as a result, then, in this day and age, they must expect the international community to show concern and perhaps even threaten intervention. Such intervention could range from persuasive diplomatic intercession, to more assertive political and economic measures in the form of sanctions, to the coercive form of military intervention in extreme cases.⁹ It is obvious, therefore, that the best way of guaranteeing state sovereignty is to discharge the responsibilities of sovereignty towards the citizens and all those under the jurisdiction of the state.

In my dialogue with governments, one of the requirements of my mandate, the first five minutes with the President, the Minister, or the appropriate authorities are crucial in assuring them of my recognition of the problem as internal and therefore under state responsibility. But while emphasizing my respect for their sovereignty, I quickly move on to present the positive interpretation of sovereignty and the supportive role of international cooperation. Once a cordial climate has been established, candid and constructive dialogue can follow, with little or no constraint in the name of sovereignty.

The reality is, of course, less congenial or harmonious than this picture of seeming civility of dialogue conveys. Internal conflicts, especially those connected with acute

⁸ *Masses In Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*, by Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, Brookings Institution Press, 1998, p. 275-280.

⁹ UN document: SG/SM/7136 GA/9596; Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, September 20, 1999.

ethnic, religious or cultural contradictions in nation-building are often associated with a crisis of national identity as a cause and effect, creating severe cleavages between the victim population and their government or other controlling authorities. Instead of being seen as citizens who merit protection and humanitarian assistance, they are often perceived as part of the enemy, if not the enemy itself, and therefore neglected, and perhaps even persecuted. The problem is compounded by ineffective government authority and control, limited capacity for economic growth and distribution, and, above all, tensions between centralized political and economic forces and various local and ethnic constituencies seeking greater autonomy and equitable participation in the political and economic life of the country. Dispossessed by their own national authorities, their only source of protection and assistance becomes the international community. The critical question then is how the international community can intercede to overcome the obstacles of negative sovereignty and ensure access to the needy population.

III. Scope of Activities of the Mandate

When the mandate was created by the Commission on Human Rights, with the prodding of the non-governmental organizations, supported by a number of concerned governments, the need was glaring, but it was not clear what the international community could do about it. My mandate was both specific and open-ended, which allowed considerable room for creativity and innovation. And yet, it is important to emphasize that whatever we did under the mandate was requested, authorized, or sanctioned by the Commission, the General Assembly and related organs of the United Nations Organization.

Over the years, the role of the mandate has crystallized into that of advocacy, raising the level of awareness about the displacement crisis world-wide, and acting as a catalyst for international response. More specifically, the activities of the mandate have focused on four areas: developing an appropriate normative framework for responding to the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced; fostering effective

institutional arrangements at the international and regional levels to these same ends; focusing attention on specific situations through country missions; and undertaking further research to broaden and deepen our understanding of the problem in its various dimensions.

With respect to the first area of work, there was from the start a wide recognition of the fact that, unlike refugees who are governed by the 1951 Convention on Refugees, there is no international legal instrument for protecting and assisting the internally displaced. At the request of the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly, I began to work with a team of international legal experts to study the extent to which international law provides adequate protection for internally displaced persons. In a two-part Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms, they found that while existing law covers many aspects of relevance to the situation of internally displaced persons, there nonetheless exist significant gaps and gray areas where the law fails to provide sufficient protection. The team recommended bringing together in one document all the legal provisions relevant to the internally displaced to restate the law and also address the identified gaps and gray areas.¹⁰ The Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly welcomed the Compilation and, on that basis, requested that I develop an appropriate normative framework for the internally displaced. In response to that request, continuing to work with the legal team, we developed the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.¹¹

The Guiding Principles were finalized in January 1998. The process was a broad-based one which brought together legal experts from all different parts of the world and included representatives of international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations at the international and national level, and research and academic institutions.

¹⁰ See UN Documents E/CN.4/1998/53/Add. 1 and E/CN.4/1996/52/Add. 2.

Although not a binding instrument, the Principles restate the existing norms of human rights and humanitarian law as well as refugee law by analogy that are relevant to the internally displaced. They set forth the rights of internally displaced persons and the obligations of governments, insurgent groups and other actors toward these populations in all phases of displacement, providing protection against arbitrary displacement, protection and assistance during displacement and during return or resettlement and reintegration. Their aim is to provide practical guidance to all those with a role to play in addressing the plight of the internally displaced.

The idea was that as a restatement of existing legal norms, the Guiding Principles would only provide guidelines for application with a focus on internal displacement and would not require formal adoption by the relevant UN agencies. All that was needed was taking note of the Guiding Principles.

Since their presentation to the Commission on Human Rights in 1998, the Guiding Principles have been widely acknowledged by UN bodies. The UN Secretary-General has cited them as a major achievement in the humanitarian area¹² and recommended to the Security Council that in cases of massive displacement, it encourage States to be guided by the Principles.¹³ The Council has indeed begun to refer to them in regard to specific situations.¹⁴ Even earlier, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), composed of the heads of the major humanitarian, human rights and development organizations, welcomed the Guiding Principles and called upon its members to disseminate them and have their staffs apply them, especially in the field. The General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights have requested that I make use of the Principles in my dialogues with Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.¹⁵

¹¹ UN document: E/CN.4/1998/53/Add. 2.

¹² UN document: A/53/139-E/1998/67, Para. 10.

¹³ UN document: S/1999/957.

¹⁴ UN document: S/RES/1286 (2000).

¹⁵ See UN documents: A/RES/54/167; E/CN.4/RES/1999/47; E/CN.4/2000/L.72.

The General Assembly and the Commission have also encouraged the wide dissemination and application of the Principles by international, regional and non-governmental organizations. Several regional organizations, among them the Organization of African Unity, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have indeed begun to disseminate the Principles, to use them as a basis for measuring conditions on the ground, and to sponsor workshops featuring the Principles. In May of this year, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) co-sponsored with the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement and the Norwegian Refugee Council, a regional workshop on internal displacement in the South Caucasus, convened in Tbilisi, Georgia. Similar such workshops have been held in Africa, Asia and the Americas¹⁶, and further seminars are planned for next year in the Sudan, Indonesia, and Southern Africa.

Dissemination of the Principles has been facilitated through their translation into different languages. In addition to the official languages of the UN, the Principles have been translated into Azerbaijani, Georgian, Burmese, Karen and the Afghan languages of Dhari and Pashtu, and will soon be available in Armenian.

As a result of all these efforts, the Principles are increasingly being used as an advocacy tool by international organizations and NGOs in their work on behalf of the displaced. Governments also have been finding the Guiding Principles a useful guide for the development of laws on internal displacement and as a yardstick for measuring conditions in their countries. A number have publicly praised the development of the Principles and several governments in countries with serious situations of internal displacement have actively supported and participated in seminars on the Principles.

¹⁶ South Caucasus in Tbilisi, Georgia, May, 2000; Asia in Bangkok, Thailand, February, 2000; Bogota, Colombia in May, 1999; and Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October, 1998.

At the same time, there are governments which have begun to question the innovative process by which the Guiding Principles were developed. At the July 2000 session of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a number of governments expressed the view that principles not drafted or formally adopted by governments cannot have real standing. More recently, in the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the same group of Governments tried to prevent the reference to the Guiding Principles in the "omnibus" resolution on the work of the UNHCR, despite the fact that such reference had been part of the resolution adopted unanimously by the General Assembly for the last two years. In the end, at the insistence of Egypt, the resolution was voted on and adopted by a majority of 118 with none against and 30 abstentions. Ironically, these governments are among those that have voted for the Commission and General Assembly resolutions encouraging the development of the Guiding Principles over the years, recommending their wide dissemination and requesting the Representative to use them as the basis for his dialogue with governments. On a positive note, the outcome of the vote itself testifies to the increasing recognition the Guiding Principles are receiving, which in turn reaffirm that they indeed fill a normative vacuum.

At a colloquy on the Guiding Principles which we convened in collaboration with the Government of Austria in Vienna in September, national NGOs throughout the world reported on their use of the Principles in their dialogue with local and national authorities.¹⁷ Regional intergovernmental organizations too cited the Principles as an effective protection tool; and in Asia, national human rights commissions acknowledged the utility of the Guiding Principles, both in their monitoring activities and in advising Government officials and legislators on the content of draft legislation. The Principles furthermore have been cited by UN treaty bodies in their interpretation of the law relevant to internally displaced populations and in Colombia, the Supreme Court has referred to the Guiding Principles in two recent decisions for the protection of the

¹⁷ *Report of the International Colloquy on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, The Brookings Project on Internal Displacement, The Brookings Institution, 2000.

internally displaced. There is little doubt that the Principles have gained standing and authority worldwide.

With respect to institutional arrangements, the gaps in the international system relating to the internally displaced have always been obvious. Again in contrast with refugees, for whom UNHCR has responsibility for their protection and assistance, there is no single specialized agency for the internally displaced. In my first report to the Commission, I suggested a number of remedial options ranging from the creation of a specialized agency for the internally displaced, to the designation of an existing agency to assume full responsibility for them, to a collaborative arrangement that would utilize existing capacities and enhance the effectiveness of the international system.

Regarding the first option, it soon became clear that there was no political will in the international community to create a new agency for the internally displaced. Designating one single agency to assume full responsibility for the internally displaced is an idea that resurfaces periodically, as it did again earlier this year when Ambassador Richard Holbrook of the United States made that proposal while President of the Security Council. However, a broad consensus has emerged that the problem is too big for one agency and requires the collaborative capacities of the international system.

Nevertheless, there is a need to strengthen the collaborative approach in order to overcome the challenging problems of coordination and the gaps in response that frequently arise under the present arrangement, especially in the realm of protection. The Secretary-General's reform program drew special attention to the gaps in the international system in responding to the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced and gave the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) the responsibility for ensuring that these needs are adequately addressed within the inter-agency framework.¹⁸

¹⁸ "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform," by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. See UN Doc. A/51/950, 14 July, 1997.

In an effort to focus greater attention on the protection of internally displaced persons, I consulted with the ERC and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we concluded that it would be useful to draft a joint policy paper on what protection means precisely and how it might be ensured by the international system. The resulting paper, adopted by the IASC in December 1999, notes the need to give practical effect to the responsibilities of international agencies in regard to protection as a principle of security, physical integrity, and respect for all human rights. The paper sets out a number of strategic areas of activity through which they can seek to fulfil those responsibilities. These include promotion and dissemination of the Guiding Principles; active and assertive advocacy for the rights of the internally displaced; strengthening local and national protection capacities; promoting protection in the design of assistance programs, including in regard to return or resettlement and reintegration; and operational monitoring and reporting.¹⁹

The IASC also adopted supplementary guidance to UN resident and humanitarian coordinators to facilitate their carrying out their protection and assistance responsibilities in relation to internally displaced persons. The resident and humanitarian coordinators are deemed responsible for coordinating the UN's response to both the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced in a given country, and with ensuring that gaps in the response are systematically addressed.²⁰ More recently, the IASC appointed a special coordinator to lead an inter-agency network which will examine a number of country situations of internal displacement with a view to ensuring an effective response to the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons and an appropriate coordination mechanism.

¹⁹ "Protection of Internally Displaced Persons," the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 22nd Meeting held 6 December, 1999 in New York.

²⁰ "Supplementary Guidance to Humanitarian/Resident Co-ordinators on their Responsibilities in Relation to Internally Displaced Persons," the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 23rd Meeting held 5 April, 2000 in Rome.

While such developments are both welcome and encouraging, we are still at the very early stages of translating the conceptual framework of protection into an operational reality. Strategies for doing so have been outlined in the IASC policy paper. Others have been elaborated in the UN's 1999 Manual on Field Practice in Internal Displacement, which provides examples from UN agencies and partner organizations of field based initiatives supporting internally displaced persons.²¹ Additional guidance is contained in the Handbook for Applying the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, published by the UN and the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement in 1999.²²

Parallel to the process of supporting greater collaboration at the international level, the mandate also is in the process of developing cooperation with regional organizations. The importance of regional approaches to the problem of internal displacement should be underscored. Indeed, regional organizations are beginning, in varying degrees, to devote attention to issues of conflict prevention and mass displacement. The mandate is forging partnerships with the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of American States, as well as with sub-regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States, and cross-regional organizations, such as the Commonwealth.

In September of this year, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, in conjunction with the Government of Austria in its capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, convened a Supplementary Human Dimension Seminar on Migration and Internal Displacement which sought to elaborate ways in which OSCE institutions, field operations and participating States could enhance their response to internal displacement, in particular through the practical application of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

²¹ *Manual on Field Practice in Internal Displacement*, OCHA, Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy Paper Series No. 1, 1999.

The most tangible means for assessing conditions on the ground and the effectiveness of the national and international response to specific situations is through country missions. To date, I have undertaken 18, including one to Angola early this month.²³ Invitations for missions have recently been received from the Sudan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Turkey.

These country missions offer the opportunity for dialogue with Governments and other concerned actors on ways to improve the conditions of the internally displaced, in particular by bridging the gap between principles of protection and assistance and the actual conditions of the internally displaced on the ground. They also help advance understanding of the generic problems of internal displacement and the responses that are needed to alleviate the dire conditions to which the displaced are often subjected.

Country missions also, ironically, raise the stakes involved in the needed response. The mere fact of a mission conveys to the displaced populations that the international community cares about their plight. And in the meetings with them, although one should not promise too much, it is inevitable that one gives them hope for international co-operation with their government to address their needs. But unless these missions in fact result in improved responses to their needs, hope can turn to despair, leaving them worse than they were before the mission. This is why I plead with all concerned, both national and international actors, to do what is within their capacity to respond to the needs of the displaced and prove to them that the world genuinely cares about their plight.

Finally, the mandate has been involved in the preparation of studies on internal displacement, the most significant of which is the comprehensive study composed of two volumes: Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement and The Forsaken

²² *The Handbook For Applying the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, published by the Brookings Project and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2000.

People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced, co-authored with Roberta Cohen and published by the Brookings Institution in 1998.²⁴ The objective of this study was to probe into such issues as the numbers and distribution of internally displaced persons globally, their needs, how they are being met, what gaps exist in meeting them, and how these gaps can be bridged by the international community, including regional organizations and NGOs. The study in particular identifies the tremendous gap in the area of protection and makes a series of recommendations for increasing attention to the physical security and human rights of displaced populations. It is our hope that this study will contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the global crisis of internal displacement, and of the steps needed to address it. The response we have already received indicates that the study has indeed already achieved much of our intended objective.

IV. Addressing the Root Causes

An effective response to the crises of internal displacement should not be limited to addressing the crisis of internal displacement as a symptom; it must go to the deeper, root-causes which lie in the structural problems of nation-building: mismanagement of identity conflicts, gross inequities in the shaping and sharing of power, national wealth, opportunities for development, and chronic abuse of power resulting in egregious violations of human rights.

During the Cold War period, these internal problems were over-shadowed by the larger global confrontation of the super powers and their proxy conflicts between and within nations. The tendency was to see conflicts largely in terms of this global ideological

²³ Countries visited: Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burundi (twice), Colombia (twice), E. Timor, El Salvador, Georgia, Mozambique, Peru, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, former Yugoslavia.

²⁴ *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*, by Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, Brookings Institution Press, 1998; and *The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced*, edited by Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, Brookings Institution Press, 1998.

divide. Internal and regional crises were addressed, contained, or covered up through this bi-polar control mechanism of the Cold War global order.

With the end of the Cold War, and the strategic withdrawal of the major powers, crises are now being perceived in their proper national and regional contexts, instead of being distorted as part of the proxy confrontations of the Cold War era. This is indeed a positive development. But commensurate to this is the need to reapportion responsibility, with the state concerned assuming the primary role, countries of the region who are affected by the overflow of internal crises coming next, but with the international community still needed to play a supporting role as the ultimate guarantor of universal human rights and humanitarian standards.

As a symptom of the structural problems that generate conflict, displacement is a national challenge that ultimately calls for creating an environment where all citizens feel a sense of belonging on equal footing, where their human rights and fundamental liberties are respected without discrimination on the grounds of race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, among other grounds, where the state will respond effectively to their needs for protection and humanitarian assistance, and where, in the end, they are guaranteed lasting solutions to return to their homes, or be resettled and assisted to resume self-reliant and integrated development.

Ironically, displacement often exposes the affected rural population to the opportunities which citizens in urban centers enjoy and which they have been denied. Consequently, it can have the effect of increasing their resentment and hostility. Unless effectively remedied, this can sow the seeds of further conflict in the country. Indeed, the crisis of displacement should be seen as a wake-up call and an opportunity for addressing the deeper, structural ills of the country to forge a national common ground, and a collective vision for nation-building.