

**Stocktaking Meeting on Internal Displacement: An Opportunity to Follow Up
Report of Discussions Held at CICG, Geneva
December 13, 2013, 12:30-5:00pm**

Introduction

Following on from the Protection Dialogue on internally displaced persons (IDPs) convened by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva from December 11-12, 2013, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, in cooperation with the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, invited a range of stakeholders to come together to look at developments since the [November 2012 stocktaking meeting](#) hosted by the Special Rapporteur and Brookings. The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on the High Commissioner’s dialogue, and to discuss the following questions:

- Has the situation of IDPs improved over the course of the past year? Has the international community’s response gotten better?
- What progress has been made on the two joint priorities identified at the November 2012 stocktaking meeting – support for the African Union (AU) Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and encouraging durable solutions to displacement, particularly through the engagement of development actors?

Participants also reflected on the future of the IDP mandate. This brief report summarizes the key ideas, concerns and recommendations explored during this discussion.¹ In particular, the discussion underscored the continued importance of the priorities established at the November 2012 meeting, and the ongoing need to devote concerted effort to advancing them, alongside strengthened responses to the crises unfolding in countries such as Syria and the Central African Republic.

Reflections on the High Commissioner’s protection dialogue on IDPs

At the November 2012 stocktaking meeting, many participants expressed concern that the issue of internal displacement was “slipping” on the international agenda, despite the fact that the number of IDPs uprooted by conflict and human rights violations worldwide is rising. Against this backdrop, participants at this follow-up meeting strongly welcomed the focus of the High Commissioner’s 2013 protection dialogue on IDPs, and expressed hope that following up on the dialogue would provide further opportunities to ensure that the challenges facing IDPs receive the attention they deserve from local, national, regional and international actors.

Participants were pleased that issues including the protection of urban and non-camp IDPs, the pursuit of durable solutions, and the development of national laws and policies on IDPs were all

¹ The discussion followed Chatham House rules. Accordingly, the ideas expressed in this report are not attributed to particular individuals or institutions. The conveners would like to express their thanks to the government of Switzerland for their assistance in supporting the event, and the volunteer moderators who facilitated the discussion.

major themes at the dialogue. One participant suggested that the dialogue was “reassuring on some fronts, and predictably puzzling on others.” Various speakers expressed concern that displacement owing to natural disasters was under-examined, and that some discussions relied on untenable generalizations or assumptions about the vulnerabilities facing IDPs, rather than the careful collection and analysis of evidence on the diverse challenges that displaced persons and their neighbours encounter in particular contexts, and their resilience. Many remarked that it was positive to hear resounding support at the dialogue for increased efforts to ensure protection and promote durable solutions for IDPs, and calls for strengthened support for the development of national laws and policies on IDPs. However, it was concerning to see that some actors still see attention to IDPs as potentially coming at the expense of other populations. For some individuals and organizations, the dialogue provided an opportunity to challenge this perspective, and to be bolder in addressing problems such as staffing that have hampered a full-throated response to IDP situations.

“The true value of the dialogue,” one participant suggested, “is still to be determined.” The long-run value of the event will depend on the concrete steps that are taken to maintain a high profile for IDP situations, and to follow up on the many important issues raised at the dialogue, including the revisiting of UNHCR’s IDP policy. Some emphasized that opportunities should also be explored to integrate IDP issues into UNHCR’s policy on urban refugees. Effective follow up will require leadership from UNHCR Executive Committee Member States and states facing internal displacement situations; the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC); and UN Country Teams. This will in turn necessitate sustained awareness raising and advocacy, including from civil society, to ensure that responsibilities towards IDPs are taken seriously – including in terms of increased funding, UNHCR field presence in IDP situations, and training opportunities. While the dialogue understandably focused on the role of UNHCR, it is essential that IDP issues are comprehensively addressed from a rights-based approach even in countries where UNHCR does not have a major role to play in responses to displacement (e.g. in natural disaster situations). Participants also stressed the importance of ensuring that the perspectives of IDPs themselves are integrated into efforts to follow up on the issues raised at the dialogue.

Advancing shared priorities

Participants underscored the continued importance of the priorities for common action identified at the November 2012 stocktaking meeting, and their clear resonance with UN Member States.

Promoting and supporting the implementation of the Kampala Convention

Over the course of the past year, a wide range of activities have been undertaken by different actors in support of the further ratification and effective implementation of the Kampala Convention. These activities include awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives in support of ratification and domestication; support for policymaking processes; training sessions; research and reporting to capture the insights from the Kampala Convention process; and efforts to raise awareness of the Convention in other regions that may be interested in exploring similar approaches. The Special Rapporteur’s 2014 report to the Human Rights Council will focus on the Kampala Convention, and will contribute to raising awareness of this important standard, its history and implications.

In sum, there is currently significant momentum behind the Convention, and widespread support for continued action on this priority issue. Indeed, much work remains to be done, from strategy development, awareness-raising, training and capacity building to the provision of legal support. Identifying clear priorities, nurturing collaborative approaches, and ensuring coordination will be essential. The Friends of Kampala group may continue to be a significant venue in this respect. Sustained, close cooperation with the African Union (AU) will also be essential, given the AU's leading role vis-à-vis the Convention. "Champions" of the Convention amongst West, East and Southern African AU Member States may play a vital role in encouraging their fellow Member States to sign, ratify and domesticate the agreement. Participants suggested that regional organizations such as ECOWAS also have valuable contributions to make to advancing the adoption and implementation of the Convention.

Moving forward, there is a need for greater clarity on the implications of the Convention for different international actors, and the important roles that actors including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) can play in supporting the implementation of the Convention. Increasing the engagement of parliamentarians and the availability of local, African expertise to support policy development processes and engage in monitoring related to the Convention were also flagged as valuable steps. In addition, examining the institutional and financial aspects of national instruments developed to domesticate the Convention would be helpful, with a view to identifying what kinds of arrangements work in best in different contexts. While much of this work focuses on the African continent, opportunities to strengthen IDP protection through regional processes elsewhere should also be nurtured.

Promoting durable solutions to displacement: Tackling the development dimensions

It is increasingly well recognized that displacement is not simply a humanitarian issue, but is also a critical development concern, and that effective support for durable solutions to displacement requires the active involvement of development actors. Transforming this recognition into practice remains a challenge, although progress has been made in, for example, a number of projects in Côte d'Ivoire, and various World Bank projects in the Sahel, and efforts are underway to integrate development approaches into the response to the Syrian crisis, including through the establishment of a "Regional Development Coordinator". Integrating displacement and durable solutions into national development plans has proven to be particularly impactful in various countries. Durable solutions have now been explicitly incorporated into Early Recovery Advisor training for the first time. Some donors are now more vocally advocating cooperation between humanitarian and development actors in support of durable solutions, and are taking gradual steps to adapt funding mechanisms so that such cooperation is more feasible and incentivized. The inclusion of support for reintegration of displaced populations in UNDP's new strategic plan is a significant step, as is the piloting of the Secretary-General's 2011 Policy Committee Decision and Framework on durable solutions in the early aftermath of conflict in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and Kyrgyzstan.

The inclusion of language on development actors in the renewal of the IDP mandate was also highlighted as an important accomplishment that provides the Special Rapporteur with a solid

foundation for engaging with this community. The Special Rapporteur's 2013 report to the General Assembly on the interlinked development, humanitarian and peacebuilding dimensions of durable solutions, and the consultative process that informed it, also provide an important basis for future collaborative, cross-sectoral work in support of durable solutions. Recent missions in countries such as Serbia, Georgia, Sri Lanka and Côte d'Ivoire have also provided valuable opportunities to address durable solutions issues, including their development dimensions.

The following suggestions were made for moving forward on this issue:

- **Raising awareness and supporting the operationalization of the IASC Framework:** The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons is an important tool, but increased efforts are needed to raise awareness of the framework, particularly at the field level. At the same time, further attention is needed to the question of how the Framework may be operationalized. This includes the development of relevant indicators that can be used by technical/information management actors, as well as the provision of advice for governments and other actors on the development of effective durable solutions support strategies based on the Framework. The effective application of the Framework in post-disaster, urban environments is an under-examined challenge that merits increased attention in future.
- **Highlighting links between durable solutions and “resilience”:** Much work remains to be done to “translate” the discourse surrounding internal displacement into terms that resonate with development actors. The connections between durable solutions and the resilience agenda may be a particularly beneficial “hook” for explaining why development actors need to engage in supporting durable solutions to displacement. Making this case will depend on the continued collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data on particular displacement situations. Such exercises should be collaborative, in that they should involve both humanitarian and development actors working alongside one another.
- **Cooperation and exchange of lessons:** Lessons from the deployment of durable solutions advisors to support the development of durable solutions strategies in Côte d'Ivoire and Kyrgyzstan should be gathered, shared and integrated into future work. The inter-agency Technical Working Group on Durable Solutions may be a valuable venue for such cooperation and exchange of lessons. Greater insight is needed into the challenge of using short-term interventions to strengthen the capacity and commitment of national and local authorities with responsibility for supporting durable solutions, and to ensure that short-term interventions are appropriately linked to longer-term work.
- **Maximizing opportunities and increasing engagement of a wide range of development actors:** The inclusion of support for reintegration in the current UNDP strategic plan was highlighted as a “tremendous opportunity” that needs to be maximized, alongside strategic efforts to integrate displacement and durable solutions into the post-2015 development agenda. While the inclusion of “specific groups” and rights-based approaches in the post-2015 agenda has been subject to resistance, opportunities to make this discussion meaningful and relevant for displaced populations may be promoted through, for example, the working group on peaceful and stable societies. Moving forward, it will be necessary to engage development actors who have not, to date, played a major role in this discussion, including regional development banks and local authorities.

- **Strengthening donor approaches and policies:** The development of policies on internal displacement by donor governments can be an important opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the humanitarian and development arms of funding agencies in support of durable solutions – particularly if there is a strong focus on the effective implementation of such policies. The U.S. Agency for International Development’s IDP policy revision process may be informative in this respect.

Participants emphasized that as this discussion continues, it is important not to mistake the engagement of development actors as a “magic bullet” for the resolution of displacement crises. Indeed, in many cases, displacement crises are the result of development failures. The *quality* of development being undertaken, the implications of development models for equality and the wellbeing of the poor, and the political dynamics shaping displacement situations, must always be at the forefront of analysis.

The future of the IDP mandate

At the same time as participants welcomed the contributions and accomplishments of the IDP mandate and its supporters over the past twenty years, they recognized the limits inherent in a response to internal displacement that is reliant on the voluntary contributions of an independent expert, supported by a small team. As one participant expressed it, a voluntary, individual mandate can only be a “small piece of what is needed.” Moving forward, some participants suggested that a more explicit and reliable commitment from UNHCR to addressing IDPs is needed (including through the establishment of an IDP focal point), alongside strengthened institutional architecture to ensure that the rights and needs of IDPs uprooted due to natural disasters are effectively addressed. Others suggested that debates on the configuration of the mandate must not detract attention from large institutions’ own efforts to assess and strengthen their investments in support of IDPs. Some recommendations from other participants focused on opportunities to increase the profile and operational impact of the IDP mandate, for example by transforming the mandate from a special procedure into a Special Representative of the Secretary-General position. At the same time, other participants underscored the value of the link to the Human Rights Council, particularly in terms of keeping human rights protection issues in focus. While there was no consensus on some of these issues, and they clearly merit further discussion in the upcoming years, many spoke in strong favor of transforming the mandate into a Special Representative of the Secretary-General position on a permanent basis after the current mandate.