

CONFERENCE ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE IGAD SUB-REGION
Experts Meeting, 30 August – 1 September 2003

Recommendations of the Meeting

(Adopted by the Ministerial Meeting, 2 September 2003)

I. Introduction

A conference of experts on internal displacement in the IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority for Development) sub-region, co-sponsored by IGAD, the Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/Internally Displaced Persons Unit, was convened from 30 August to 1 September, 2003 in Khartoum, Sudan, hosted by the Government of the Republic of Sudan in its capacity as Chair of IGAD.

The purposes of the meeting were to (1) review the causes, circumstances, consequences and trends of internal displacement in the IGAD sub-region, (2) discuss the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and their application to the problems involved, (3) promote strengthened policies, laws and institutions at the national level to deal with internal displacement, and (4) explore the role that IGAD can play in promoting strengthened national and regional response to the problem of displacement.

The participants included delegations from all IGAD Member States, representatives of national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from these countries, the African Union, United Nations and other international agencies, international NGOs, donor Governments, and regional and international experts on internal displacement (see attached list of participants).

The meeting addressed a number of themes, including the nature of the problem of internal displacement globally and in the IGAD sub-region, the Guiding Principles, protection and humanitarian access, and the national and international response to the needs of IDPs in general, and in particular the most vulnerable among them, durable solutions, and the roles of national and local government, civil society, non-governmental organizations, regional organizations, international organizations and the international community.

For the purposes of this document, and without prejudice to the rights of IGAD Member States to apply the definition that suits their own IDP situations, the term "internally displaced persons" refers to the definition in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."

II. Overview of the Situation

The experts meeting noted with great concern the scale and severity of the problem of internal displacement in the IGAD sub-region. Of the twenty-five million internally displaced persons (IDPs) uprooted by armed conflict or situations of generalized violence worldwide, there are over five million in the IGAD sub-region and they can be found in each IGAD member state except Djibouti. The contexts in which internal displacement occurs vary, but predominant among them are situations of conflict, natural disasters and, in some countries, the tradition of cattle-rustling.

Many of the internally displaced in the IGAD sub-region suffer from severe hardship and insecurity, often for prolonged periods. The large majority of the displaced are women and children, whose particular protection, assistance and reintegration needs require specific attention. Moreover, it was recognized that internal displacement affects not just uprooted populations -- the task of assisting and protecting the internally displaced is often borne by local or "host" communities, who themselves often are in need and require support.

The meeting affirmed that ensuring the welfare and security of internally displaced persons is first and foremost the responsibility of their Governments. Because internal displacement is a common problem among IGAD states and one that has cross-border dimensions -- both in terms of causes and effects -- a regional approach was also considered important. Moreover, there is a need to develop stronger linkages and partnerships among the various levels of actors -- local, national, regional and international -- involved in addressing the problem of internal displacement.

III. Recommendations

A. Member States

1. Develop national policies on internal displacement using the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as a useful reference, much as some member states have already begun to do. Such policies should:
 - a. Comprehensively address all phases of displacement: prevention, protection and assistance during displacement, and durable solutions;
 - b. Specify the institutional arrangements for addressing IDP issues;
 - c. Address the protection, assistance and reintegration needs of displaced women and children, who make up the majority of the displaced, with special attention to women heads of households, adolescents and other especially vulnerable groups;
 - d. Ensure that the particular needs of elderly and disabled persons are adequately addressed;
 - e. Integrate protection into programming for IDPs;
 - f. Support and strengthen the efforts of host communities;

- g. Integrate humanitarian and development approaches that promote self-reliance and support the coping mechanisms of IDPs;
 - h. Promote durable solutions, i.e. return, resettlement or integration, and ensure that they are carried out voluntarily and in conditions of safety and dignity;
 - i. Provide the necessary support so that chosen durable solutions remain viable for the long term;
 - j. Give access to land and facilitate abandoned return of property of IDPs;
 - k. Involve the displaced in decisions related to their assistance, protection and durable solutions and, in particular, ensure that women, children, the disabled and the elderly are given a voice;
1. Protect the natural environment in areas of displacement.
 2. Empower the community and work in cooperation with national civil society and the international humanitarian community to address IDP issues;
 3. Establish national human rights institutions and encourage them to address the issue of internal displacement;
 4. Ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and regional standards by all military and civilian personnel;
 5. Take the necessary steps to implement regional, i.e. OAU/AU and IGAD decisions and plans of action relating to displaced persons, and take note of the AU's interest in developing a specific protocol on IDPs, using the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement among the references;
 6. Commit themselves to work together towards sustainable peace in the region as a durable solution to the problem of displacement, including by supporting peace-building initiatives and the development of a "culture of peace"
 7. Support and encourage the use of traditional methods of dispute settlement and conflict resolution in a manner consistent with international humanitarian and human rights standards;
 8. Provide humanitarian access to internally displaced persons for humanitarian organizations and to protect the safety and security of humanitarian workers;
 9. Provide for security in IDP encampments and settlements;
 10. Address human rights abuses, such as sexual assault, exploitation, enforced prostitution, ill-treatment and other gender-related security issues;
 11. Address abduction and recruitment of children;
 12. Address the dangers of landmines, in particular through clearance and mine safety awareness campaign;
 13. Compile accurate and timely data on the internally displaced, disaggregated by age and gender;
 14. Ensure that IDPs are included in HIV/AIDS prevention and response strategies and programs;
 15. Allocate resources in national budgets to respond to internal displacement;

16. Provide a progress report to the IGAD Secretariat on the implementation of these recommendations on a semi-annual basis.

B. IGAD

17. Develop a regional strategy on internal displacement;
18. Develop regional strategies to address phenomena that exacerbate problems of internal displacement, including small arms proliferation and cattle rustling;
19. Assist member states in developing national policies, plans and strategies on issues of IDPs;
20. Integrate consideration of internal displacement into IGAD's Disaster Risk Management, early warning, and peace promotion programs;
21. Provide a forum for states to discuss IDP issues and exchange information and to incorporate these issues into the existing IGAD Civil Society Forum as well;
22. Disseminate and provide information to Member States about the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and best practices;
23. Facilitate in developing regional projects / programmes in mitigating disasters and formulation of rehabilitation projects / programmes based on the IGAD regional Disaster Risk Management Programme that has been developed with the member States;
24. Accelerate and strengthen the implementation of CEWARN (Conflict Early Warning) in support of preventing further displacement;
25. Compile, analyze and disseminate data on internal displacement;
26. Study and assess situations of internal displacement in IGAD member states and make recommendations;
27. Convene a meeting with donors to address the return and reintegration needs of IDPs.

To implement these recommendations, it is further recommended that IGAD:

28. Establish a Unit within the Secretariat to handle issues of forced displacement;
29. Seek resources from the member states and the international community for IGAD to carry out the recommended activities and fund the Unit.

C. The International Community

30. Support the strengthening of national capacities, both governmental and non-governmental, for addressing the protection, assistance and recovery needs of internally displaced persons;

31. Strengthen the institutional capacity of the IGAD secretariat in developing programs for addressing internal displacement;
32. Respond to humanitarian crises quickly and with adequate assistance;
33. Devote greater efforts and resources to bridging the relief to development gap, including by developing flexible funding mechanisms to support transitional strategies;
34. Find ways to break down institutional barriers to a holistic approach to the problems of internally displaced persons, refugees, demobilized combatants, and other persons affected by conflict, that also ensures attention to their specific needs;
35. Make greater efforts to work in full partnership with governments and national NGOs to address IDP issues.