Internal Displacement and Development Agendas: A Roundtable Discussion with Sadako Ogata

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Around the world today, there are more than 15.5 million refugees and over 28.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) uprooted by conflict, in addition to some 32.4 million displaced in 2012 from their homes due to natural disasters. These displacement crises are not simply humanitarian concerns, but fundamental development challenges. Forced migration flows are rooted in development failures, and can undermine the pursuit of development goals at local, national and regional levels.

Linking humanitarian responses to displacement with longer-term development support and planning is not a new concern. Beginning in 1999, for example, the "Brookings Process" – under the leadership of Sadako Ogata and James Wolfensohn – sought to bridge humanitarian relief and development assistance in post-conflict situations. But the challenge remains unresolved, and has acquired new urgency as displacement situations are becoming more protracted, and situations such as the Syrian crisis show no signs of resolution.

The Brookings Global Economy and Development Program and the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement held a roundtable on these issues on May 14, 2013 with Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, former Director of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and Distinguished Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Megan Bradley, Fellow with the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, facilitated the roundtable, which followed Chatham House rules.

The roundtable addressed several key topics including:
- The relevance of the concept of human security to addressing displacement and development challenges
- Displacement as a development challenge in fragile states
- Protracted displacement
- Contrasts in the approaches and processes adopted by humanitarian and development actors

The report below provides a brief overview of the discussion.

Human security: A useful approach for linking humanitarian and development work

Participants discussed how the human security approach can be used to frame efforts of humanitarian and development actors to facilitate the transition toward sustainable peace and development in contexts affected by conflict and large-scale displacement. Established in 1999 and administered by the Human Security Unit, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security has financed over 200 human security projects in

85 countries. The evaluation of this mechanism provides a valuable opportunity to take stock of lessons learned in the implementation of the human security concept, and to consider how in the future it may play a role in successfully addressing the development dimensions of displacement.

Various participants suggested that there has not been enough application of the human security concept to date. This is due in part to the narrow mandates and specializations of various actors. Others proposed more concertedly integrating human security and human rights-based approaches, and underlined that effectively applying the human security concept to address displacement and development challenges requires not only coordination between international organizations and NGOs working on humanitarian and development issues, but also coordination and cooperation within governments (including donor governments). Participants stressed the need to clearly demonstrate how addressing displacement, particularly its development dimensions, from a human security perspective is in states' interests.

Displacement, development and state fragility

The vast majority of progress achieved to date in global poverty reduction has been made in stable countries. As poverty reduction efforts move forward, development actors are increasingly focused on fragile states, where sustainable poverty reduction has been much more elusive, and where internal displacement is often a prominent challenge. For example, between 1990 and 2008, of the 17 countries that have persistently scored badly on the World Bank's measure of institutional capacity (CPIA), 14 have experienced major civil wars. Two of the remaining three have experienced minor civil wars. Hence, core development failure – institutional weakness – is often at the root of conflict. While it has become somewhat of a cliché that no fragile states have met or are on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), new evidence shows this is no longer the case: 20 states considered to be fragile have met one or more of the MDGs. Yet fragile states are four times more likely to be off track or lack sufficient data to monitor MDG targets than they are to have met or be on track to meet targets. On some MDG targets, such as reducing child mortality, not a single fragile and conflict affected state is on track to meet the target by 2015. Successes in achieving these targets are themselves fragile: for instance, Yemen was on track to meet the maternal mortality target when violence erupted during the Arab Spring; one of the consequences of the ensuing conflict and displacement crises is that the country will likely not meet this goal by 2015. As the development community pays increasing attention to how to address the symptoms and causes of fragility, the issue of internal displacement may be integrated more actively into development agendas.

Linking humanitarian and development processes is a "must" given increasingly protracted displacement

Participants recognized the need to better link development processes with humanitarian assistance in light of the fact that increasingly, refugee and IDP situations are protracted. While governments are usually keen to promote return, this may not be a practical or preferable option for many displaced populations. Greater attention is needed to how to support local integration opportunities for displaced populations. This entails more concertedly addressing the development challenges faced by displacement-affected communities – including refugees and IDPs themselves, as well as host community members.

Participants recognized the importance of addressing the role of environmental factors, including the effects of climate change, on the dynamics of displacement and development. Environmental factors can contribute to displacement flows, and can undermine durable solutions to displacement, for example when changed environmental circumstances render previous livelihoods unsustainable. This points to the need for development interventions that promote durable solutions and meet people's needs while preventing environmental degradation. Also discussed was the fact that urbanization and the development of urban/semi-urban livelihoods are becoming the norm for those living in protracted displacement. These dynamics need to be recognized an integrated into planning for durable solutions and responses to the development concerns facing displacement-affected communities.

Approaches and processes adopted by humanitarian and development actors

Several participants expressed the view that unlike humanitarian actors, development actors do not typically have "speed on their minds." The humanitarian objective is to save lives first whereas the developmental objective is much more process-oriented.

Participants discussed experiences in places such as Ituri in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where humanitarian and development agencies were working to support the return of displaced populations. Development actors' efforts to provide housing for the returnees could not keep pace with the rate of returns, due to slower operating and procurement procedures. While the processes adopted by agencies such as UNDP were appropriate by intergovernmental agency standards, because the populations' needs were not being promptly met, many returnees began to take branches off of trees and build their own shelters. This led to deforestation and the destruction of many hectares of land.

Discussion also turned to the internal displacement situation in Somalia, with one participant noting that while some parts of Somalia are stabilizing and on a positive trajectory, IDPs are not benefitting from development efforts. When development actors rebuild schools and other buildings IDPs have been using for shelter, IDPs are forced to leave. The government has advocated the return of the displaced populations, but for many if not most, this is not currently viable. In the absence of durable solutions, many IDPs in Mogadishu are to be relocated to the outskirts of the city to make way for development projects.

Participants noted that humanitarian aid is a costly and ultimately unsustainable way to respond to populations' needs in protracted situations. While humanitarian aid is intended to be short term, in protracted displacement situations, long-term development support is needed. While the cluster approach has helped to improve coordination in countries such as Haiti, the Early Recovery Cluster's efforts fall short of a developmental approach. Participants stressed that it is also important to recognize that most displaced persons do not survive on international aid alone. Humanitarian organizations are not doing enough to understand and support the remarkable coping strategies displaced populations employ. In countries such as Colombia that are gradually emerging from conflict, one participant suggested that some of the programs being offered to support IDPs need to be carefully assessed in terms of their added value, to be sure that old approaches are not simply being repackaged as 'transitions'. There is also a need to consider *where* development assistance is targeted. IDPs often do not live in areas that attract

significant levels of development assistance, and can be left in the lurch when humanitarian assistance ends without development projects being implemented.

The process of creating ownership of development efforts was also discussed. What are the consequences of promoting state ownership of development efforts in contexts where the state itself is unwilling or unable to provide support to IDPs, and may in fact be responsible for their displacement? Participants stressed that international actors need to identify and develop vehicles to build local ownership and sustainability when the state cannot or will not take responsibility.

Recognizing that the dominant contemporary development assistance model centers around state ownership, some participants emphasized the need to clearly communicate and establish the value of addressing displacement from a development perspective. Rather than establishing new "pots of money" for collaborative responses to displacement between humanitarian and development actors, efforts need to be made to promote integrated planning (particularly in protracted displacement situations), and to help build resilience to disasters and further displacement.

Questions for future discussion include: What has been the practical significance of the human security concept, particularly for agencies involved in responding to displacement (including its humanitarian and development dimensions)? How can the human security concept advance efforts to resolve displacement situations, and respond to their development implications? How may displacement figure in efforts to support development in fragile states?