

Durable Solutions to Displacement: Development and Peacebuilding Dimensions

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Displacement can undermine stability, undercut development, and expose refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to increased risk of human rights abuses. As new forced migration crises unfold in countries such as Syria and the Central African Republic, and displacement situations from Eastern Europe to Colombia become increasingly protracted, the need for durable solutions to displacement has never been clearer.

Whether displaced persons return to their former homes, locally integrate, or resettle elsewhere, enabling durable solutions to [displacement requires cooperation between development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors](#), including affected governments, donors, international organizations and civil society actors. Supporting durable solutions is a priority concern for the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; his October 2013 [report to the UN General Assembly](#) presented in October 2013 addresses the development and peacebuilding dimensions of this challenge. In order to stimulate further discussion of this critical issue, on Friday 25 October 2013, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights joined with the Permanent Missions of Liechtenstein and Uganda to host a side event on “Durable solutions to displacement: Development and peacebuilding dimensions.”

Uganda’s experiences in supporting the resolution of displacement

After a warm welcome from Mr. Stefan Barriga, Minister and Deputy Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein, Ambassador and Permanent Representative Richard Nduhuura of Uganda opened the discussion with reflections on his country’s efforts to resolve displacement linked to the conflict in Northern Uganda, recognizing that “only comprehensive solutions could bring about an end to internal displacement.” Ambassador Nduhuura underscored that Uganda’s 2004 policy on IDPs provided an important foundation for the resolution of the country’s displacement situation, particularly as it emphasizes the need for solutions such as return to be voluntary, safe and dignified. Ambassador Nduhuura noted the challenges Uganda faced in supporting solutions to displacement, including delivering services to returnees who had dispersed into communities, and exploring the regularization of IDP settlements in order to enable local integration as a durable solutions option. Enabling IDPs to remain where they sought shelter by transforming initially informal settlements into appropriately serviced, permanent communities may be an important avenue for opening up solutions to displacement. However, in Uganda and elsewhere, realizing this option often raises complex challenges such as the negotiation of land claims, and requires careful support from development actors. Experiences in Uganda underline the

need for internal displacement and durable solutions to be integrated into both peacebuilding strategies and development plans.

Enabling durable solutions: Insights from the Special Rapporteur's recent missions

In his keynote address, Dr. Chaloka Beyani, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, elaborated on the themes raised in his report to the General Assembly. The Special Rapporteur welcomed the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in promoting durable solution for IDPs, and the recognition by IASC members such as the World Bank that responding to displacement, including by supporting durable solutions, is not only a humanitarian challenge, but is also an important development concern.

The Special Rapporteur highlighted how the challenge of resolving displacement has figured in some of his recent missions to Serbia, Kosovo, Georgia and Sudan. The Special Rapporteur applauded the greater openness among authorities in Serbia and Kosovo to cooperate in supporting durable solutions to displacement. Regional organizations such as the European Union have important roles to play in encouraging this continued openness and dedication to enabling durable solutions for IDPs in Eastern Europe. While return has often been posed as the “ideal” solution to displacement, local integration is increasingly preferred by those who remain uprooted. The challenges include resolving outstanding housing, land and property (HLP) disputes, ensuring that IDPs have the opportunity to participate in elections, and generating durable housing opportunities for IDPs in tandem with the creation of sustainable livelihoods. The extension of regional housing initiatives for refugees so that they also benefit IDPs represents an important step towards addressing the latter challenges. Legal developments such the creation of policies in Kosovo requiring adequate budgetary support for IDPs also play important roles in facilitating durable solutions. While the government of Georgia continues to underline that IDPs who wish to return to their homes have the right to do so, the Special Rapporteur highlighted and welcomed the government's increased willingness to support local integration, whether as a long-term or interim option. As in Kosovo and Serbia, appropriate housing is needed in Georgia in order to improve livelihoods and in turn support the durable resolution of displacement.

Reflecting on his mission to Sudan, the Special Rapporteur noted that the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur represents a major opportunity to increase access to durable solutions of IDPs in Sudan. Importantly, the Document recognizes that need for significant and sustained development support, and well as truth, justice and reconciliation efforts, in order to achieve peace and, in turn, sustainably resolve the country's displacement situation. Drawing on his discussions with a diverse range of stakeholders, including IDPs themselves, the Special Rapporteur stressed that the displaced want options concerning durable solutions. Many wish to reconnect with their home areas while also preserving the networks and livelihoods they developed while displaced – an option that could be supported through innovative and responsive humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions.

Durable solutions as a development challenge

Ms. Awa Dabo, Team Leader for Africa with the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), discussed the incorporation of IDP and returnee reintegration into UNDP's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. The inclusion of IDPs in UNDP's strategic plan is a major achievement that reflects the nature of internal displacement as a development concern, and the need for development actors to engage promptly and consistently in supporting durable solutions for IDPs. While UNDP has a particular focus on supporting reintegration in the context of broader economic revitalization efforts, it is clear that the development challenges facing IDPs go beyond livelihoods. Broader development planning efforts need to be sensitive to the needs of displaced communities as well as host communities. In regions such as the Sahel, where post-conflict dynamics are intertwined with post-disaster issues, an integrated and holistic approach to supporting durable solutions is needed. In particular, opportunities should be seized to link support for durable solutions to efforts to increase communities' resilience to further disasters and conflicts.

Historically, collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in support of durable solutions has been stymied by the lack of effective mechanisms to foster cooperation, as well as different paces of work. Recognizing the need for a more rapid response to issues such as durable solutions, UNDP is seeking to improve its fast track procedures. Alongside these efforts, UNDP has an important role to play in ensuring that area-based approaches are appropriately attuned to post-conflict displacement concerns, and that opportunities to address the root causes of displacement are maximized.

Beyond incorporating the reintegration of returning refugees and IDPs into the 2014-2017 UNDP Strategic Plan, Ms. Dabo stressed that the needs of the most vulnerable, including IDPs, must be reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

Durable solutions as a peacebuilding challenge

Mr. Henk-Jan Brinkman, Head of Policy with the Peacebuilding Support Office, emphasized that peacebuilding – as a process that is fundamentally committed to dialogue, inclusivity and institution-building – is a key element of durable solutions. IDPs must have the opportunity to participate in peacebuilding dialogues at both the local and national levels, and they should be actively included in the assessment processes that inform peacebuilding and post-conflict development efforts. For example, the fragility assessments that are conducted as part of the New Deal should be inclusive of IDPs. Promoting equitable inclusion as a key element of peacebuilding means that IDPs should be able to participate fully in political processes, but the challenge extends beyond political participation. In order for peacebuilding and efforts to resolve displacement to be successful and sustainable, IDPs must also be able to access social services and participate in economic life on an equal footing. Efforts to reform or create new institutions in the context of peacebuilding processes should be sensitive to the ways in which horizontal inequalities between groups can increase risk of future violence. This entails acting to limit the potential marginalization of IDPs, and ensuring that services are available in the remote areas to which IDPs may return. This may require targeted capacity building and institutional strengthening activities to make sure that IDPs are included in the social contract.

Turning to the question of the post-2015 agenda, Mr. Brinkman underlined that progress cannot truly be celebrated if certain groups continue to systematically lose out on development gains and the benefits of peace processes. It is therefore important to ensure that issues of inequality and in particular the reduction

of horizontal inequalities are incorporated into the post-2015 agenda. This is highly relevant to the resolution of displacement as it is often the persistence of horizontal inequalities that undermines the pursuit of durable solutions for IDPs.

Reflections on durable solutions from UNHCR and civil society

Before the floor was opened for questions, Mr. Udo Janz, Director of the New York Office of UNHCR and Dr. Megan Bradley, Fellow with the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, offered initial reflections on the speakers' comments. Mr. Janz welcomed the progress that is being made in terms of humanitarian and development actors working together in support of durable solutions for refugees and IDPs. He emphasized that in many cases, the lack of political solutions to the crises that cause displacement remains a fundamental barrier to durable solutions. This points to the need to consider peacebuilding as a fundamental aspect of durable solutions. While debates on durable solutions have often focused on the challenge of collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, Mr. Janz welcomed the way in which the Special Rapporteur's report to the General Assembly also recognizes the need for the active involvement of the peacebuilding community in supporting solutions to displacement. The High Commissioner's commitment to IDPs is reflected in the fact that the High Commissioner's December 2013 protection dialogue will focus on IDPs, and will address challenges including support for durable solutions as a critical part of protection.

Dr. Bradley reflected that it is clear that on the international level, this is a time of increased interest and opportunity vis-à-vis durable solutions for IDPs. Developments such as the inclusion of IDPs in UNDP's new strategic plan and the piloting of the [Secretary-General's Policy Committee Decision and Framework on Solutions](#) may catalyze real progress on this issue. However, she highlighted two outstanding challenges. The first is the challenge of raising awareness of the concept of durable solutions, and the tools that are available to support solutions for IDPs. From discussions with partners in the field, it is clear that many key actors remain unaware of standards such as the [IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#). Even where standards such as the IASC Framework are well-known, there is a need for further discussion of how this tool may be effectively operationalized. As awareness-raising efforts are undertaken, it will be important to connect the question of durable solutions to critical development challenges such as urbanization and disaster risk reduction. Second, as debates proceed on how international actors can better support durable solutions, it is easy to lose track of local level realities. For instance, too often it is assumed that states, UN agencies and international NGOs "provide" durable solutions for IDPs, overlooking the fact that it is displaced persons themselves who craft solutions to their displacement – with support from governments, NGOs and international actors. Too often, the solutions that are promoted are out of step with the aspirations and desires displaced persons have for their own lives. The need for choice amongst durable solutions, and the legitimacy of each durable solution – including but not limited to return – should be consistently recognized. Additionally, the role of local NGOs in displacement-affected countries in supporting solutions to displacement should not be overlooked. These are often the groups that span sectoral divides between humanitarians, development workers and peacebuilding actors. As standards such as the IASC Framework stress, the pursuit of durable solutions is a long term process. Local NGOs remain in-country to provide long-term support for durable solutions after clusters have closed and international missions have wound down, and should be engaged in the process from the outset.