

## **INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND DEVELOPMENT**

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At first glance it appears a bit strange to highlight the issue of internal displacement in a conference on “Globalization, International Migration, and Development.” But it isn’t so strange – given their large numbers – to have the issue included in a conference on ‘People on the Move.’ In fact, I would argue that in order to understand global migration, we need much more emphasis on the movements of people within their national borders. There are about 200 million international migrants worldwide – and 200 million internal migrants in China alone! There is a similar disparity in looking at those displaced by conflict. There are an estimated 11.4 million refugees in the world while 26 million people are internally displaced by conflict, not including those displaced by natural disasters and development projects who are estimated to be a far larger number.<sup>1</sup>

I want to stress the importance of looking at migration and displacement through a human rights lens. All human beings, regardless of where they live and what their status is, are guaranteed basic human rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international and regional human rights instruments (at least as far as a state has subscribed to them). The legal standards which apply to particular groups of people who move from their communities are largely determined by two factors: 1) the motivations for their departure, or whether the ‘character’ of the movement is voluntary or involuntary and 2) where they go. Those who leave voluntarily, for example in search of

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<sup>1</sup> 2007 *Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, June 2008. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4852366f2.pdf>

better opportunities, are generally considered to be migrants, either internal or international. Those who leave their countries because they are forced to do so because of persecution or conflict are considered to be refugees,<sup>2</sup> while those who leave for the same reasons – or because of natural or man-made disasters – but remain within their countries are considered to be internally displaced persons (IDPs). While all have basic human rights, different laws apply to economic migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. But it is important to realize that life is complicated and so are individual decisions to leave one’s community. For example, the reasons for moving are often a mixture of motivations, including factors which push people from their homes and others which draw them to other places. Poverty limits choices for those migrating because of conflict, unemployment, and natural disasters, and political factors can often influence whether someone is treated as a refugee or as an economic migrant.

What I would like to do today is to focus on one group: internally displaced persons and trace some of the connections between:

- Internally displaced persons and people forced to leave their country because of conflict
- Internally displaced persons and migration
- Internal displacement and development, with a subchapter on natural disaster-induced displacement and development;
- Internal displacement and political participation

But first a word on definitions. There are lots of definitions of ‘international migrants’. The International Organization for Migration defines ‘international migrants as those persons who cross international borders in order to settle in another country, even temporarily. The term ‘migrant’ in the UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families is understood as “covering all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, for reasons of ‘personal convenience’ and without intervention of an external compelling factor.”<sup>3</sup> UNESCO defines a migrant as “any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country.”<sup>4</sup>

According to art. 1(A) (2) of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person who:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality

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<sup>2</sup> They may also be beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary forms of international protection.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the working group of intergovernmental experts on the human rights of migrants submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/15, Commission on Human Rights, 54<sup>th</sup> session, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, “Migration and integration – some basic concepts,” 2005.

and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it<sup>5</sup>.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are defined as: “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.”<sup>6</sup> Unlike migrants, who are assumed to leave their communities voluntarily (although this is an area where lines are blurred), IDPs are forced to leave their homes. In this respect, they are similar to refugees (although the refugee definition is much narrower than that of IDPs.)

This definition comes from *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* which sets forth the rights of IDPs and the obligations of governments towards them. Developed at the request of governments, as expressed in resolutions of the UN General Assembly and Commission on Human Rights, the 30 principles provide a normative framework for understanding what national responsibility should entail. At the 2005 World Summit, the General Assembly recognized the Guiding Principles as an “important international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons and resolve(d) to take effective measures to increase the protection of internally displaced persons.”

Although it isn't the main focus of my presentation today, I want to point out that just twenty years ago, there was little recognition that IDPs existed or that they had needs which were different from those of others in their countries. It is a fascinating story of how a small group of non-governmental organizations, legal experts, national governments and international organizations managed not only to raise awareness about this particular category of people, but to develop soft international law and to inspire reform in the international system. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Guiding Principles and it might be interesting in the discussion to see if there are any parallels with the need for new types of action on the issues being addressed at this conference.

In particular, I note that there is no compilation of existing human rights law as it applies to migrants, although migrants do indeed have basic human rights under existing international conventions. While the UN's 1990 Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families provides binding international law, to date only 30 or so countries have signed or ratified the convention and none from a country which receives large numbers of migrants. Given the political difficulties in securing additional ratifications in the near term, it might be useful to draw out of existing international human rights agreements – which have already been ratified by a majority of the world's countries -- those provisions which particularly apply to migrants, either in general or in specific regard to irregular migrants. A compilation of relevant provisions of existing

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<sup>5</sup>The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o\\_c\\_ref.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm)

<sup>6</sup> *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), February 1998. Available at: [http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/gp\\_page.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/gp_page.aspx).

international law could be of great help, both to migrants' rights advocates and to governments seeking to understand the nature of their obligations, particularly to those who are in their territory without state sanction.

### Relationship between internal and external displacement

As might be expected, there are some conflicts that generate both IDPs and refugees. With a few exceptions, such as Afghanistan in the 1980s and Burundi, contemporary conflicts tend to generate more IDPs than refugees. Thus Sudan has 4.7 million IDPs and 'only' 686,000 refugees while Turkey has between 954,000 and 1.2 million IDPs but 'only' 227,232 refugees.<sup>7</sup> In cases such as Colombia, Georgia, Chechnya and Tajikistan, the number of refugees is overshadowed by massive internal displacement. This makes intuitive sense: in many cases, it is simply too difficult, dangerous or expensive to make it to the border of a neighboring country.<sup>8</sup> And in every region in the world, borders are becoming more difficult to cross. Geography also plays a role; while Timor Leste had 100,000 IDPs in 2006, it is not surprising that there were only 251 Timorese refugees and 9 asylum-seekers registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR.)<sup>9</sup>

While many people assume that IDPs and refugees are pretty much the same, in fact there are important differences. First off, the definition is different. IDPs include those displaced by natural and man-made disasters. Refugees do not. The international standards are different. The rights of refugees are guaranteed under the legally-binding 1951 Convention on Refugees (and its 1967 Protocol) while IDPs fall under the much softer international standards of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. The term 'refugee' is thus a legal one, with proscribed means of determining refugee status while the term 'IDP' is descriptive and confers no legal status. While refugee law is supported by 50 years of national jurisprudence, scholarly research, and UNHCR Executive Committee conclusions, the corresponding body of legal interpretation for IDPs is in its infancy. UNHCR is the "guardian" of the 1951 Convention and was created in 1951 with a mandate of assisting and protecting refugees. For IDPs, there is no established 'guardian' of the Guiding Principles (although the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs often fulfills that function.) Nor is there a single UN agency charged with assisting and protecting IDPs, but rather a looser approach in emergency situations whereby different agencies take the lead in different areas or 'clusters.' While an international agency is charged with protecting refugees – because by definition they are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of their government -- it is national authorities who are responsible for IDPs because they

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<sup>7</sup> Refugee figures from *Statistical Yearbook 2006: Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions*.(Annex). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Dec. 2007). Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?id=478ce34a2&tbl=STATISTICS>. IDP figures from IDMC website at: [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Catherine Phuong, *The International Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> *Statistical Yearbook 2006: Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions* (Annex). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Dec. 2007). Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?id=478ce34a2&tbl=STATISTICS>.

are citizens or habitual resident of that country. This holds even when it is national authorities themselves who contributed to the displacement.

There are also differences when it comes to solutions for refugees and for IDPs. For refugees, the three durable solutions are: voluntary repatriation, local integration in the host country, or resettlement to a third country. For IDPs, the solutions are return to their communities, integration into their host communities or settlement in another part of the country. While UNHCR is usually involved in facilitating repatriation, negotiating local integration, or referring cases for resettlement, it is national authorities who are responsible for supporting durable solutions for IDPs. In practice, when both refugees and IDPs are returning to their community, UNHCR has assisted both groups. In general, IDPs tend to return to their communities earlier than refugees for several reasons: their closer proximity to home, the lack of adequate assistance in their area of displacement, and perhaps because of better communication with those back home.

Over a century ago, Ravenstein posited that migration occurs in stages, through which people gradually move from shorter to longer distances – from rural areas to villages, to towns, to cities and so on.<sup>10</sup> This step migration concept is also seen in anecdotal evidence from internally displaced persons, who when they are not safe or protected within their own country of origin may then leave their country and become refugees abroad. International human rights law recognizes the fundamental right of everyone, including IDPs, to leave their country and to seek asylum in another country and this is reaffirmed in the Guiding Principles. UNHCR’s historical reluctance to increase its involvement with IDPs has reflected the agency’s concern that its core mandate of protecting the right to seek asylum not be weakened.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of “internal flight alternative” is one clear indication of the way in which internal and external displacement are linked. Governments, particularly European governments, have argued that asylum requests can be rejected as long as those seeking asylum are able to find safety in another part of their country. In other words, it is acceptable to return them even if their return means that they become IDPs.<sup>12</sup> Thus the British government has recently begun to return Darfuri asylum-seekers whose claims have been rejected to Khartoum. Those Darfuris who are reluctant or unable to return to Darfur will join the ranks of Sudanese IDPs.

There are other examples of the ways in which the internally displaced and refugees’ paths cross, indicating the complexity of population movements. Returning refugees who are not able to go back to their communities of origin often join the ranks of the internally displaced. Refugees can become internally displaced, as in the case of recognized Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in early 2008 who were forced to abandon their places of

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<sup>10</sup> John Corbett, “Ernest George Ravenstein: The Laws of Migration, 1885,” Center for Spatially Integrated Social Science. Available at: <http://www.csiss.org/classics/content/90>

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Ferris, “Internal Displacement and the Right to Asylum,” *Refugee Studies Quarterly*, 2008 (forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> This is true except for very specific circumstances where such a return would be contrary to peremptory norms, such as the principle of non-refoulement.

habitual residence (refugee camps) as a result of fighting between the Lebanese army and a local militant group in the camps.<sup>13</sup> These are displaced refugees. There are cases where economic migrants become refugees when conditions in their country of origin change. These are called “refugees *sur place*” and are provided for as such in the 1951 Refugee Convention. There are cases where economic migrants caught up in violence in their host country, are assisted by international agencies to return, as was the case with migrant workers in Lebanon during the 2006 conflict with Israel. As well, there are populations that may be displaced within their own country and are therefore IDPs, but become refugees when internationally-recognized borders change, as happened with the breakup of the former Yugoslavia.

While the definition of IDPs in the Guiding Principles includes persons who have been forced to flee their homes or places of habitual residence -- and thus not only citizens, the recent situation in South Africa illustrates some of the difficulties in applying these concepts. With a long history of receiving immigrants to work in their diamond mines, South Africa hosts a high number of migrants from its regional neighbors, predominantly Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana and Swaziland. While there are no accurate figures on the number of migrants in South Africa, a recent report from Human Rights Watch estimated that there are between one and 1.5 million Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa.<sup>14</sup> Given the political conflict in Zimbabwe, it is likely that many of these ‘migrants’ are in fact fleeing violence in their country and at least some should be eligible for recognition as refugees. In May of this year, a violent outburst against migrants living in South Africa led many of them to seek safety within the country – and to confusion by the authorities and humanitarian actors about their status. For those few who were recognized as refugees, it was clear that they were entitled to the rights enjoyed by refugees. But for people who had entered the country illegally, it was less clear whether they were to be considered as illegal migrants or as IDPs, particularly when they had only recently entered the country. It is difficult to consider newly-arrived undocumented migrants as having a ‘place of habitual residence’ in South Africa.

Neither the *Guiding Principles* nor the *Annotations to the Guiding Principles* spell out the criteria for determining a “place of habitual residence;” this is presumed to be the responsibility of national authorities. Such criteria often include the time one has spent in the country, the presence of family members as well as indicators of integration, such as employment, type of accommodation, children’s enrollment in schools, etc. Thus in South Africa, those migrants who come to work in the mines, leaving family members behind and live in hostels might not be considered as ‘habitual residents’ of South Africa. On the other hand, they may be considered habitual residents when they live for many

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<sup>13</sup> *Lebanon: Displaced, again*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (23 July 2008) Available at: [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpCountries\)/99D28A56726B48B9802570A7004CCFD8?opencument&count=10000&expand=1&link=27.1&count=10000#27.1](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountries)/99D28A56726B48B9802570A7004CCFD8?opencument&count=10000&expand=1&link=27.1&count=10000#27.1)

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Neighbors In Need: Zimbabweans Seeking Refuge in South Africa*, June 2008. Available at: <http://hrw.org/reports/2008/southafrica0608/>

years in such conditions, returning to their countries of origin only once or twice a year. This is an issue which merits further reflection and guidance for governments seeking to ensure that the human rights of all those living within their territory are respected.<sup>15</sup>

### Relationship of displacement to migration

Economic migrants are generally seen as those who leave their homes voluntarily in search of work or a better life while those who are displaced – either IDPs or refugees – leave because they are forced or coerced to do so. In the literature on international migration there is considerable work being done on the relationship between globalization and migration; the assumption is that because of globalization, migration is increasing. But there is also a relationship between globalization and conflict. With globalization the world has become increasingly interconnected and as a global community has emerged, conflict has become less focused on state identity and more focused on economic or social matters. In general, the trend is that more conflicts are taking place within the borders of a state than between states, and they are more prevalent in those countries with weaker economies, or scarcer resources. In fact, many of the most intractable conflicts are those between groups struggling for control of natural resources, rather than to assert a particular political or ideological cause.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, there has been a greater trend towards internal as opposed to cross-border displacement.

There is evidence that people fleeing violence use the same migratory routes as those traveling for mainly economic reasons. Thus in the Central American conflicts of the early 1980s, hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans, Guatemalans and Nicaraguans made the same journey to North America fleeing violence as their compatriots had previously done in search of better economic opportunities. The same pattern seems to hold in terms of internal displacement where those escaping conflict are likely to go to cities where there are already migrants from their communities. Thus in Afghanistan today and Peru a decade ago, those displaced by violence in the countryside joined urban migrants; although their motivation for leaving was different and although their needs are often different, there are also many similarities between them.

Conflicts displace people not only because of the immediate threat of physical violence, but also because they destroy livelihoods and public services. In some cases, this is a deliberate strategy of war; for example, in Darfur, the *janjaweed* deliberately burned villages and fields as a way of ensuring that the displaced would not be able to return. In present-day Iraq, many Iraqis have fled their communities because of threats and violence, but many have also left because they could not access medical care or their children could not attend school.

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<sup>15</sup> Normally, place of ‘habitual residence’ refers only to those who have been granted legal status by the government of the host country and excludes those in the country without the permission of the government, although undocumented migrants are entitled to fundamental human rights.

<sup>16</sup> G. Carbonnier and S. Fleming, eds., “War, Money and Survival,” Forum Series (International Committee of the Red Cross), no. 2 forum held. (Geneva: ICRC, Feb. 2002).

The line between voluntary migrants and the forcibly displaced is often blurred. Many of those considered to be ‘voluntary’ migrants who have left to seek economic opportunities in fact had little choice. For example, I have talked with many female domestic workers working outside their countries who have left children behind because they were unable to provide for them at home. “My choice was between feeding them or living with them,” one Filipina woman told me. There is little voluntariness in a decision to migrate when people are unable to survive where they are.

Traditionally migration has been seen as a good coping mechanism for responding to economic scarcity and the existence of regular, circular migration routes (e.g. nomads) is not an indication of an emergency situation. Similarly displacement may be a good coping strategy in avoiding the worst effects of conflict as when Sri Lankan families would rather be displaced than have their children recruited into the armed forces. But there is a difference when traditional temporary patterns of migration become protracted because of violence. For example, Darfurians typically traveled to the eastern part of Sudan to work on the plantations for certain periods of the year. But with the continuing violence in Darfur, many are not returning to their communities. As the violence lasts longer, the prospects for their eventual return diminish. There are also cases where people leave their homes before violence reaches their communities, what Ergon Kunz has labeled “anticipatory” refugees. This has become a problem, for example, in Colombia where people are displaced in anticipation of violence or forced recruitment, but are not considered by the government to be IDPs because they were not victims of that violence<sup>17</sup> which limits their ability to access assistance provided to IDPs.<sup>18</sup>

Trafficking is clearly a form of forced migration. But while international trafficking has received considerable attention, there is evidence that internal trafficking may be even more widespread and may, in fact, be a form of internal displacement. Because internal displacement is characterized as forced or coerced, and by the fact that the individuals do not cross a border, some have argued that those who are trafficked internally within a country should also be considered IDPs with the rights and protections provided in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.<sup>19</sup>

### IDPs and Development

The theme of this conference is the relationship between migration and development and indeed, there is a substantial academic literature on the subject.<sup>20</sup> Jeff Crisp has talked about the relationship between refugees and development, but I would like to focus on internally displaced persons and development. Internal displacement obviously has a high human cost, but it also has significant economic costs. Most obviously, those who are

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Kalin. UN Doc. A/HRC/4/38/Add.3. Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons (Addendum, Mission to Colombia), 24 January 2007.

Available at: [http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/RSG-Press-Releases/200606\\_rsg\\_colombia.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/RSG-Press-Releases/200606_rsg_colombia.aspx)

<sup>18</sup> But the Guiding Principles make it clear that those who leave their homes in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict are IDPs.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Martin, “Internal Trafficking,” *Forced Migration Review* No. 25 (May 2006): 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> See for example: <http://www.gfmd-fmmd.org/> and <http://www.migrationdevelopment.org/index.php?id=8>



displaced lose homes and property, often permanently; even when they are restored through legal or administrative channels after the conflict, these processes take a long time. Because of their displacement, they also usually lose livelihoods. Unemployment rates among IDPs are usually higher than for economic migrants. Skilled IDPs often find it difficult to find work in their fields and may engage in unskilled labor to make ends meet. Highly educated Chechnyans who before being displaced had worked as engineers, university professors, ambulance attendants and librarians, said they were now working as cleaners, cooks, construction workers, dishwashers, flyer distributors, childcare providers and market salespeople.<sup>21</sup> Even worse, some IDPs cannot find work at all. Iraqi IDP, Hussein Iyad, recently said about his all-too-common situation, “I have a wife and four children to look after but I have had no job since I was displaced. I was a mechanic and here it is impossible to get work in this area. We fled to Kerbala, southern Iraq, because it is a Shiite city. But since I am jobless we cannot afford a house here.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to a lack of livelihoods opportunities, in many cases where the male head-of-household is killed or stays behind, the woman becomes the sole breadwinner, making them more vulnerable. Or, as is the case for many Colombian IDPs, rural farmers can have a hard time finding work in urban settings.

There are also long-term economic costs to the country when large numbers of young people are unable to go to school. The psycho-social trauma experienced by those forcibly displaced from their communities can also reduce their ability to be productive citizens. The presence of large numbers of IDPs also has consequences for the communities which host them and for both the national and provincial governments. Governments may lose tax revenues from IDPs unable to work, and may incur substantial costs of providing social services, such as health and education, to IDPs. In some cases, resentment may grow among local populations, particularly when there is a perception that IDPs are receiving preferential access to assistance.

While we know that remittances play an important economic role for migrants’ countries of origin, there is very little research about the role of remittances with IDPs.<sup>23</sup> There are anecdotal accounts of urban IDPs sending money to relatives who remain in the countryside and reports of IDPs being assisted by remittances from family members who have gone to other countries. But further work is needed to discern the extent to which remittances occur within the country.

In terms of solutions for IDPs, the question of livelihoods is key. There are cases such as Azerbaijan where IDPs have been provided with housing to resettle in other parts of the

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<sup>21</sup> *Struggling to integrate: Displaced people from Chechnya living in other areas of the Russian Federation*. IDMC, June 2008, [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/ASIN-7G4N8E-full\\_report.pdf/\\$File/full\\_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/ASIN-7G4N8E-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> IRIN, “IRAQ: Hussein Iyad, ‘We live in misery.’” 11 January 2007. Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=64371>

<sup>23</sup> Patricia Weiss Fagen and Micah N. Bump, “Remittances in Conflict and Crises; How Remittances Sustain Livelihoods in War, Crises, and Transitions to Peace.” October 2005. Available at: [http://www.ipacademy.org/pdfs/Remittances\\_ERPT.pdf](http://www.ipacademy.org/pdfs/Remittances_ERPT.pdf)

country, but where jobs are not available.<sup>24</sup> Without employment or other livelihoods, the sustainability of solutions is called into question. While return to one's community of origin is often the most desirable solution for IDPs, their premature return – again, when livelihoods are not available – can threaten the stability and development in the country.

### Natural Disaster-induced Displacement and Development

The number of people displaced by natural disasters is estimated to be twice the number of those displaced by conflict – around 50 million per year (out of a total of 200 million people affected annually by natural disasters.) Almost all of that displacement is internal and it is usually temporary. As is well known, natural disasters have a disproportionate impact on the poor and marginalized in a society. For example: on 10 December 1988, an earthquake registering 6.9 on the Richter scale hit Armenia, killing some 55,000 people and leaving 500,000 homeless. Less than a year later, in October 1989, an even stronger earthquake, 7.1 on the Richter scale, hit San Francisco, California, killing 62 and leaving 12,000 homeless.<sup>25</sup> It can also be more difficult to provide humanitarian relief in areas where infrastructure and communications are not well-developed.

Natural disasters thus tend to impact precisely those groups who do not have the resources to minimize their effects. In many cases, it is not a lack of awareness of the need to reduce the risks of natural disasters and existing vulnerabilities, but a lack of resources which prevents their implementation. Disaster Risk Reduction measures are well known and in fact, represent good development practice. But they do require a commitment of financial resources which tends to be lacking in precisely those countries and regions where their need is the greatest.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, by destroying infrastructure and displacing people, natural disasters can limit a country's development while at the same time, the lack of development increases susceptibility to natural disasters.

Natural disasters, and the government's response to them, normally have political consequences which can be either positive or negative, depending on the situation.

Pelling and Dill offer seven examples of the ways in which disasters can have political effects:

- Disasters often hit politically peripheral regions hardest, catalyzing regional political tension.

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<sup>24</sup> Walter Kalin. UN Doc. A/HRC/8/6/Add. 2. Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons. Addendum, Mission to Azerbaijan, (15 April 2008), 15, 21. Available at: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G08/129/85/PDF/G0812985.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>25</sup> "San Francisco Earthquake History 1915-1989." San Francisco Earth Quake History, 1915-1989, The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco. Accessed Aug. 6, 2008. Available at: <http://www.sfmuseum.org/alm/quakes3.html> and BBC, On This Day, "1988: Death toll rises in Armenian earthquake." Accessed Aug. 6, 2008. Available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/10/newsid\\_2544000/2544077.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/10/newsid_2544000/2544077.stm)

<sup>26</sup> *Living with Risk A global review of disaster reduction initiatives, 2004 version*. Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), 2004. Available at: [http://www.unisdr.org/eng/about\\_isdr/bd-lwr-2004-eng.htm](http://www.unisdr.org/eng/about_isdr/bd-lwr-2004-eng.htm)

- Disasters are a product of development policies and can open to scrutiny dominant political and institutional systems.
- Existing inequalities can be exacerbated by post-disaster governmental manipulation.
- The way in which the state and other sectors act in response and recovery is largely predicated on the kind of political relationships that existed between sectors before the crisis.
- Regimes are likely to interpret spontaneous collective actions by non-government sectors in the aftermath of a disaster as a threat and respond with repression.
- In the aftermath of disaster, political leaders may regain or even enhance their popular legitimacy.
- The repositioning of political actors in the aftermath of a disaster unfolds at multiple levels...[as various actors] use disaster relief and recovery to extend their influence over development policies and programs.<sup>27</sup>

While those displaced by natural disasters have many similarities to those displaced by conflict, there are some important differences, particularly with respect to solutions. In some natural disasters, IDPs do not have the option of return, e.g. the 1995 volcanic eruption in Montserrat and those displaced in South Asia by riverbank erosion. If predictions are correct that sea levels will rise as a result of climate change, the option of return for those displaced is likely to be difficult or non-existent. For IDPs displaced by conflict, return to the community of origin remains an option – even though it may be politically difficult and may take a long time to realize.

### IDPs and Political Participation

IDPs are normally citizens of the country in which they are displaced, and as such are entitled to enjoy the rights of all citizens, including participation in the political process. And yet, IDPs often face particular obstacles to participating in elections. They often lack identity cards or rules may require them to return to their place of origin in order to vote. Because of their displacement, IDPs may not receive adequate and timely information about voting arrangements. Arrangements for absentee voting may be inadequate. Moreover, there can be political reasons why the rights of IDPs to vote are violated, including intimidation and insecurity.<sup>28</sup>

In some cases, IDPs may feel that participating in the political process is irrelevant, given their situation. This can create a circular situation; when IDPs do not vote, politicians may not take their concerns seriously which leads in turn to a government which isn't responsive to IDP issues, leading IDPs not to vote.

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<sup>27</sup> M. Pelling and K. Dill, “‘Natural’ Disasters as Catalysts of Political Action” ISP/NSC Briefing Paper, (London: Chatham House, June 2001), 2-5.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, Erin Mooney and Balkees Jarrah, *The Voting Rights of Internally Displaced Persons: The OSCE Region*. Brookings Institution-Johns Hopkins SAIS Project on Internal Displacement Occasional Paper, November 2004.

## Tying it all Together

There are strong reasons for ensuring that people displaced within the borders of their countries are protected and assisted.

First, as human beings, they are entitled to enjoy their basic human rights as spelled out in many human rights instruments and as summarized in the *Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement*. As citizens of their countries, they are entitled to all the rights enjoyed by other citizens and governments have an obligation to ensure that these rights are upheld.

But it is also in the government's and the international community's interests to ensure that the rights of IDPs are respected. On a political level, upholding the rights and finding solutions to IDPs can contribute to conflict-resolution. As the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs has argued, finding solutions for IDPs can contribute to peacebuilding and conversely when solutions are not found, the renewed outbreak of conflict becomes more likely.<sup>29</sup> When IDPs are unable to participate in the political process – particularly when they are many – the government has less legitimacy. On the level of security, displaced people who have little hope may be more vulnerable to pressure by insurgent groups or to recruitment into militias. When basic needs of IDPs are met, they are less likely to seek protection in other countries, which usually improves relations between governments. On an economic level, IDPs need to find solutions – and if such solutions are not immediately forthcoming, to also find livelihoods during displacement - in order to contribute fully to the development of their communities and countries. When people cannot support themselves, there are obvious implications for security, economic well-being, and social relationships.

And finally, I would argue that in order to understand the relationship between migration and development, it is essential to look at internal migration in general and at internal displacement as a particular form of these population movements. Unfortunately the likelihood is that internal displacement will increase in the future – as the result of continuing conflicts, increased barriers to asylum-seekers, and an expected increase in natural disasters as a result of climate change.

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<sup>29</sup> Walter Kälin. *Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons: An Essential Dimension of Peacebuilding* Mar. 13, 2008. Available at: [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/0313\\_peacebuilding\\_kalin.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/0313_peacebuilding_kalin.aspx) and *Addressing Internal Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements and Peace-Building*. Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, Sept. 2007. Available at: <http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/09peaceprocesses.aspx>