Internally Displaced Persons in the Truth Commission Report and the Guiding Principles

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Introduction¹

It is an honor for me to be with you today to launch the *Handbook for Applying the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in Peru*. I am especially grateful to the organizers, Eliana Revollar Añaños and Percy Tapia Vargas, of the Program to Protect Populations Affected by Violence of the Peruvian Human Rights Ombudsman's Office for organizing today's event and for giving me the opportunity to present on the *Handbook*. My presentation is divided into four parts. First, I will give a brief overview of the development and content of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. Then I will review the key themes found in the *Principles* concerning return, resettlement and reintegration of the internally displaced. Following this, I will discuss the *Framework for Action for Internal Displacement* developed at the recent regional seminar held in Mexico on internal displacement in the Americas. Lastly, I will conclude by suggesting how the *Handbook* will prove useful to efforts to address the concerns of the internally displaced in this country.

The Development and Content of the Guiding Principles

Let me begin with a few words about the development of the *Principles*. In the early 1990s, the number of persons forcibly displaced within their countries' borders began to rise dramatically because of a preponderance of civil wars. It soon became clear, however, that unlike refugees, who could turn to established international legal and institutional mechanisms to receive protection and assistance, internally displaced persons were often left unprotected and forced to fend for themselves. The United Nations, governments, and international and national organizations had no single document to turn to as guidance for helping these vulnerable persons. At the request of international organizations, NGOs and the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Francis Deng, was asked to develop a normative framework for the internally displaced.

Under Dr. Deng's direction a team of legal experts in consultation with a wide range of international organizations, regional bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions worldwide developed the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. These 30 *Principles*, which I will introduce to you today, are the first international standards specifically tailored to the needs of internally displaced persons. They set forth their rights and the obligations of governments and non-state actors to

these populations during all phases of displacement -- prior to displacement, during displacement, and during return and reintegration. Although they are not a legally binding document like a treaty, since their presentation to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998, they have acquired a good deal of international standing, moral authority and acceptance. The *Principles* are being widely used in all regions of the world by a growing number of governments and other actors concerned with addressing the protection and assistance concerns of the internally displaced.

Now I will briefly walk you through the *Principles* which are found in Annex I, page 49 of the *Handbook*. In the introduction (page 50), you will find a working definition of internally displaced persons. The two crucial elements of this definition are "coerced or involuntary movement" (that is being forced or obliged to flee or to leave one's home or place of habitual residence), and, "remaining within one's national borders." The definition also includes the major causes of displacement: armed conflict, generalized violence, violations of human rights, and, natural or human made disasters. Since internally displaced persons remain within their own countries, they are expected to enjoy the same rights and freedoms as all other citizens in their countries. Unlike refugees, who are outside their countries of origin, internally displaced persons do not benefit from a separate internationally recognized legal status.

Section I (page 51) of the *Principles* contains general principles that relate to the equal treatment of internally displaced persons and assert that the displaced cannot be discriminated against because of their displacement. At the same time, they acknowledge that certain vulnerable groups such as women, children and elderly persons may require special attention. Most importantly, the *Principles* emphasize that the primary duty for providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons lies with their national authorities, and that the internally displaced have the right to request and receive such assistance from these authorities.

Sections II-IV address the different phases of displacement. Section II (page 52) contains principles relating to protection from displacement and articulates a right not to be arbitrarily displaced. States are under a particular obligation to avoid displacement and to provide protection against the displacement of groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands. The *Principles* also provide minimum guarantees to be complied with when displacement must occur.

Section III (pages 53-58) relating to protection during displacement sets forth the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all people, including the displaced, should enjoy. And they spell out how these rights specifically apply to the needs of the internally displaced. For example, the *Principles* provide that internally displaced persons should have access to all provisions essential to their survival. Also, that they should be protected against human rights abuse, including direct assault, sexual violence, attacks on their camps and settlements, being arbitrarily detained or held

hostage in camps, or being forcibly returned to or resettled to places where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk.

Section IV (pages 64-65) on the provision of humanitarian assistance goes beyond simply pointing out the primary role of the national authorities in providing humanitarian assistance. It adds that when those governmental authorities responsible are unable or unwilling to provide assistance, international organizations have the right to offer their services, and consent to do so shall not be arbitrarily withheld. Furthermore, rapid, unfettered access to displaced populations is mandated and should be facilitated where possible. Section IV also emphasizes that beyond material assistance, the displaced also need protection of their physical safety *and* human rights. Organizations, whenever possible, are asked to address both.

Section V (page 65) of the *Principles* is highly relevant to the current Peruvian context since it addresses return, resettlement and reintegration. *Principle* 28 emphasizes the right of internally displaced persons to return voluntarily and in safety to their homes, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country. In other words, internally displaced persons have options – they can return to their home areas or resettle in another part of the country. The *Principles* emphasize that it is the national authorities' responsibility to establish a proper and secure environment in the areas of return or resettlement. Also authorities must facilitate the reintegration of the displaced, and return or resettlement processes must include the full participation of the displaced.

Principle 29 (1) reiterates the notion of non-discrimination that is found throughout the *Principles*. Returned or resettled internally displaced persons should not be discriminated against and they have the right to participate in public affairs and to access public services. Emphasis is also given to the full participation of the internally displaced in the planning and management of their returns or resettlement. This is quite important because the involvement of the displaced will help make their returns or resettlement more sustainable.

Principle 29 (2) states that: "Competent authorities have the duty and responsibility to assist returned and/or resettled internally displaced persons to recover, to the extent possible, their property and possessions which they left behind or were dispossessed of upon their displacement. When recovery of such property and possessions is not possible, competent authorities shall provide or assist these persons in obtaining appropriate compensation or another form of just reparation." Lastly, *Principle* 30 provides a role for international organizations and others in the return or resettlement phase of displacement.

It bears emphasis that throughout the *Principles* special attention is paid to the protection and assistance needs of vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and disabled. For example, the *Principles* refer to the right of women to obtain personal identity and other documents on an equal basis as men.

Key Themes Found in Principles 28-30

The *Principles* relating to return and resettlement (28-30) represent five key themes which I will explain in more detail. These are: voluntary return in conditions of safety and dignity; participation in the management of return or resettlement; non-discrimination and equality of participation and access; recovery of property and compensation; and access of humanitarian organizations.

Voluntary Return in Conditions of Safety and Dignity

The first theme is that of voluntary return in conditions of safety and dignity. It is important to explain what is meant by the terms "voluntary," "safety" and "dignity." Voluntary means that the decision to return to one's place of origin must be a free choice made by the displaced person. It should be noted that "this requirement is more than a matter of principle" since a voluntary return is more likely to be lasting and sustainable. It is essential that IDPs are not pressured to return to areas where the security conditions are not conducive to return.

There are several conditions to meet for an effective return in "conditions of safety and dignity." These are legal safety, physical security, material security and ensuring that IDPs are treated with "dignity." Legal safety can include amnesties, public assurances of personal safety, integrity, and freedom from fear of persecution or arbitrary punishment on return. Physical security takes into account protection from armed attacks and landmines. Material security means access to land, property, a means of livelihood and access to education for IDP children. The concept of dignity is "less self-evident than safety" and refers to being treated with respect and acceptance including a full restoration of rights. In practice, this means that returning IDPs should not be mistreated in any way, that they should return unconditionally and spontaneously at their own pace, and that their families are not arbitrarily separated during the return process. Landmines are another danger that can slow return or resettlement. It is, therefore, essential that mine clearance programs and mine awareness campaigns be integrated into return and resettlement programs.

IDP Participation in the Management of Return or Resettlement

Second, the participation of IDPs in the planning and management of return and resettlement helps to ensure that the return, resettlement and reintegration processes take place in a voluntary and dignified manner and are sustainable.

Non-Discrimination and Equality of Participation and Access

Third, it is important that return and resettlement processes for IDPs take place in a non-discriminatory manner and that among the displaced there is equality of participation and access. IDPs are often vulnerable to discrimination solely on account of being IDPs. Mechanisms need to be put into place so that when IDPs return, resettle or reintegrate they are not treated as "enemies" or, alternatively, favored in a manner that creates

resentment with the local or host population. It is also important that upon return they are not discriminated against when accessing public services such as education and health services or when they involve themselves in public affairs. To this end, efforts should be made to ensure that IDPs from ethnic minority groups, such as indigenous persons, are not discriminated against in areas of return, resettlement and reintegration. In addition to ensuring equity between the displaced and host communities, it is important that return programs do not generate resentment among the displaced themselves. The *Handbook* gives some practical steps that can be taken to ensure that IDPs are integrated into the return or resettlement process in a non-discriminatory manner that can be found on pages 46-47.

For example, it suggests that field organizations should:

- -"Identify and help eliminate potential conflicts between communities by convening consultations between internally displaced persons and populations residing in areas of return or resettlement, considering the needs of the resident- as well as returnee-populations in program design, and taking steps to prevent stigmatization or resentment."
- -"Plan for longer-term reintegration activities, recognizing that the economic and social disruption of return or resettlement may be present for years."

Recovery of Property and Compensation

The fourth theme often presents many complex challenges throughout the world but is vital to ensuring that further violence and tensions do not take place. The concept of "recovery of property and compensation" for the internally displaced is a multidimensional concept that focuses on the recovery of property occupied before displacement, as well as the property acquired during displacement. The first point is that the return of personal property is of crucial importance for a dignified return. Second, that access to land is crucial for sustainability, especially for rural IDPs whose livelihood is dependent upon access to land. When IDPs are unable to access land in order to sustain themselves, it is often the case that they are likely to remain dependent on assistance.

The issue of land ownership, possession of land and compensation are matters that need to be addressed with great care. One problem that frequently arises is that property left behind by IDPs is occupied by others, including other IDPs. Given that such scenarios can lead to conflict, it is important that local authorities deal with property disputes in a neutral, fair manner that also takes into account the needs and rights of the secondary occupiers. It is found that utilization of local conflict resolution techniques to address such circumstances is usually best.

With regard to compensation, it is important to note that it was the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' decision on Nicaragua in 1984 that helped guide approaches to returns of IDPs and influenced the development of the *Principles* on this point. The Commission ruled that compensation should be awarded to the Miskito Indians for the damage done to their property during displacement.

Access by Humanitarian Organizations

Fifth, it is also important to ensure that IDPs have access to humanitarian organizations and other appropriate actors such as development agencies and that there are no barriers to providing assistance in support of return, resettlement and reintegration.

Framework for Action on Internal Displacement in the Americas

I will now turn to the Framework for Action on Internal Displacement in the Americas produced at the regional seminar on internal displacement in the Americas which took place in Mexico City this past February. Hosted by the Government of Mexico and cosponsored by the Office of the Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on IDPs and the Brookings Project, it was the first regional seminar of its kind to focus exclusively on internal displacement in the Americas. As such, its purpose was to examine current trends in internal displacement in the region and the national, regional, and international response. Participants included: the Governments of Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru; parliamentarians; national human rights institutions; local and international non-governmental organizations; the United Nations; the World Bank; regional bodies; IDP leaders and experts from research institutions. The delegation from Peru included Congressman Walter Alejos Calderon of Ayacucho and representatives from the National Program to Support Repopulation in Emergency Zones (PAR), the Table on Displacement and Persons Affected by the Violence (MENADES), Project Counselling Service (PCS) and the Coordination for the Displaced and Communities in Reconstruction of Peru (CONDECOREP).

The outcome of the seminar was a *Framework for Action*, which outlines sixteen points for improved national response to IDPs in the region. It should be noted that although the *Framework* places its primary focus on the role of governments, it also recognizes that all actors (regional, international and national actors including IDPs themselves) have a role to play in reinforcing national responsibility and assisting states in discharging their responsibility. This *Framework* also incorporates best practices and "lessons learned" from past and present cases of displacement in the Americas.

Key elements of national responsibility for IDPs in the Americas, or the steps governments should take, include:

1) Raising national awareness of the plight of IDPs and of responsibilities towards them

While Colombia has recognized the problem for several years, in Mexico this important step has been taken only recently. In Peru, positive steps have been taken since 2003 to recognize that the problem persists even though the conflict has ended and democracy has been restored. Acknowledgement therefore is a critical first step for addressing the problem, but it is hardly sufficient. Raising national awareness must also mean building a national consensus around the issue, making internal displacement a national priority

and promoting solidarity with the displaced. Promoting national solidarity with IDPs is critical towards removing the ethnic, racial, and ideological stigmas IDPs typically suffer. Efforts in this regard can include mass sensitization campaigns that reach all relevant authorities, including the military and police, and also extend into the public sphere, so that national responsibility for addressing IDPs' needs becomes a concept embraced and implemented by all parts of society. Such campaigns should be developed in consultation with civil society and IDP communities.

2) Ensuring that the national response covers all groups

In the Americas, displacement is a phenomenon that disproportionately affects indigenous populations and minority ethnic groups. Once displaced, these already marginalized groups face discrimination and language barriers when attempting to access assistance. In the case of Peru, an estimated 70% of IDPs belong to indigenous and native and peasant communities. One community in particular, the Ashaninkas, suffered greatly due to displacement and subsequent enslavement by armed actors. The Truth Commission report considers the violations committed against this population to be so grave that it recommends that an analysis be undertaken to assess whether the partial destruction of this ethnic group amounts to genocide under the Genocide Convention.

It is critical that a national response seeks to remedy the fundamental social, economic, and political cleavages that give rise to the exclusion of certain groups from the political and economic wealth of the nation. Addressing the displacement crisis can be viewed as an opportunity to integrate marginalized groups into society and address the injustices and social divides that have torn the society apart and often fueled displacement.

3) Training government officials, the military, police, and parliamentarians

Training on IDP issues and the *Principles* is essential to ensuring their awareness of their responsibilities towards the displaced and strengthens national capacity to effectively discharge these responsibilities. Those responsible for providing such training to officials in Peru should utilize the Peruvian version of the *Handbook*.

4) Collecting data on the numbers and conditions of IDPs

Credible information on the numbers and conditions of IDPs is essential to designing effectives programs for them. Such data should be disaggregated by key indicators such as age and gender. They should also reflect the specific needs of the elderly, indigenous persons and widows. More information is needed on IDPs in protracted situations of displacement such as those found in Peru and Guatemala, as well as IDPs residing in urban areas including the shanty towns. Those collecting data, need to be sensitive to the situation of IDPs who may be fearful of making themselves known and may see little incentive to do so, or who do not understand Spanish.

5) Developing national legislation upholding the rights of IDPs

Developing and adopting national legislation for addressing the needs and protecting the rights of IDPs is another indicator of national responsibility. Such legislation should be comprehensive; covering all causes and phases of displacement, and be based on the provisions found in the *Guiding Principles*. In May 2004, President Alejandro Toledo took the significant step of promulgating Law No. 28223 on internal displacement, which notes and incorporates provisions found in the *Principles*. This Law is important because it defines who is an IDP, prohibits arbitrary displacement and identifies the rights of citizens with regard to protection and assistance during displacement and resettlement and reintegration. Most notably it states that the state is obligated to protect indigenous, native and minority peasant and other communities with a special dependence on their lands from displacement. Now that the law has passed follow up is needed to ensure that it is implemented. Government representatives such as members of Congress should engage in dialogue with civil society to promote understanding of the law and help foster the political and social will to implement it.

6) Adopting a national policy on internal displacement

The adoption of a national policy on internal displacement is a distinct, though complementary, measure to the enactment of national legislation. A national policy or plan of action for IDPs should, for instance, spell out the responsibilities of different government departments for responding to internal displacement as well as a mechanism for coordination among them. Like the law, a national policy should cover all phases of displacement. National policy, like legislation, should be developed in close consultation with the displaced and civil society.

7) Making sure there is an interim response

While promoting the development and adoption of national laws and policies on internal displacement, it must be recognized that these processes take time to develop, sometimes years. In the interim, IDPs cannot be left neglected. Measures can and must be taken by national authorities to address IDPs' immediate needs. Longer term policies should never be an excuse for setting aside the immediate needs of IDPs. In the Peruvian context, there are many IDPs, in particular those living in shanty towns who continue to lack access to basic services, job opportunities and the means to rebuild their lives. I visited communities in 2003 residing on the outskirts of Lima. What surprised me the most was that these persons who were displaced many years ago continued to live in conditions similar to persons who have just become displaced. Government authorities in cooperation with civil society and in coordination with leaders of the displaced should develop strategies that allow IDPs to move toward self-sufficiency as soon as possible.

8) Designating a national institutional focal point

Critically important to ensuring that the steps just mentioned are implemented is the designation of a national institutional focal point for IDPs. Once the institutional option is selected, it is essential that it have a mandate for both assistance and protection. In addition, this entity must have the political authority as well as adequate resources to carry out its mandate.

9) Establishing accountability mechanisms

Procedures for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of national law, policy and institutional responsibilities should be introduced, and included in national law and policy on IDPs. Such procedures must be in addition to the critical monitoring and reporting role played by civil society. Moreover, international and regional actors have a key role to play in reinforcing national responsibility and accountability for the displaced.

10) Allocating adequate resources

Where a government lacks the capacity to fully address the needs of the internally displaced, its indication, in particular through budgetary allocations, that the issue of internal displacement constitutes a national priority, can be important in attracting international financial assistance in support of national efforts.

11) Expanding national human rights institutions' involvement with IDPs

National human rights institutions can play an important role in ensuring the promotion and protection of the rights of IDPs in a number of ways: (i) awareness-raising and human rights education, especially among authorities; (ii) providing advice to government officials and legislators on draft legislation relating to internal displacement; (iii) monitoring governments' implementation of national legislation as well as their compliance with international treaty obligations; and (iv) investigating individual IDP complaints. NHRIs in the Americas have increasingly given attention to the plight of the internally displaced. They could, however, expand their activities, in particular by playing a greater role in monitoring IDP conditions and establishing a presence in high-risk areas. The Peruvian Human Rights Ombudsman's Office decision to publish and disseminate the *Handbook*, as well as to convene meetings such as this one serves as a good example of activities national human rights institutions can take to benefit internally displaced populations.

Cooperating closely with IDPs and civil society

As articulated in the *Principles*, authorities have a responsibility to encourage and facilitate the participation of IDPs in the planning and implementation of policies and programs pertaining to their situation. Too often, however, IDPs and those advocating on their behalf simply do not have "a seat at the table." Yet, national responses to internal displacement can be significantly informed and enhanced through consultation with IDP associations and civil society. Efforts must be made to proactively seek out the views of

IDPs and to take them into account in the design of policies, laws, and programs to protect and assist them. To facilitate such exchange, formal consultation mechanisms such as *mesas de trabajo* or "working tables" should be established with IDP organizations as well as with civil society groups working with IDPs. It should be noted, however that for working tables to be effective, mechanisms should be set up to guarantee that these consultations influence government responses. The international community could play a valuable "bridging" role in fostering and facilitating such dialogue between the government and IDPs as well as civil society.

13) Enhancing security for IDPs and those working on their behalf

Far greater efforts must be made by the governments in the region to protect IDPs and communities at risk of displacement as well as those seeking to help them and to bring to justice those responsible for attacks against them. In addition, public information campaigns should be launched to sensitize government authorities, including the military and police as well as the public, about the humanitarian nature of the work of those assisting and advocating on behalf of IDPs, drawing attention to the benefits of this work and dispelling misconceptions.

14) Addressing the climate of impunity

Governments must make much greater efforts to break links between their armed forces and paramilitary groups. There is a particularly urgent and widespread need to do so in Colombia. The paramilitaries there are often engaged in uprooting people and committing serious abuses against IDPs. Those who have or continue to commit crimes against IDPs and their advocates must be brought to justice in the Americas. The climate of impunity that exists in so many countries must be brought to an end..

15) Supporting durable solutions to internal displacement

National responsibility for IDPs encompasses finding durable solutions to their plight. As stated earlier, national authorities have a responsibility, to establish the conditions enabling IDPs to return or resettle. They must ensure that security is an essential element of durable solutions. This requires that protection measures be put in place in areas of return or resettlement, including re-establishment of the rule of law and measures to ensure respect for human rights.

Whether IDPs choose to return or resettle, they must be provided with reintegration assistance. Special attention must be given to ensuring the inclusion of women who, in the Americas and elsewhere, have been at the core of return and reconstruction processes and a key agent of social and economic development. Women's equal access to financial resources, credit and adequate income-generating projects must be ensured. Steps must be taken to ensure that IDPs are not subjected to discrimination in areas of return or resettlement, have equal access to public services including health care and education, and can exercise their right to participate fully and equally in public affairs.

Further, the authorities have a responsibility to assist IDPs to recover property and possessions of which they were dispossessed as a result of their displacement or, when this is not possible, to obtain compensation. Special attention must also be paid to ensure that property rights, which traditionally have been restricted to men, are accessible to women.

As stated earlier, for solutions to be truly effective and lasting the root causes of the conflict and displacement must be addressed. Efforts to promote national reconciliation, such as recognizing the plight of the displaced and implementing the recommendations made by the Truth Commission, will serve to help heal the wounds of conflict and rebuild trust in the society.

16) Addressing the situation of IDPs under the control of non-state actors

Since IDPs may be under the control of insurgent groups and out of reach of government assistance and protection, humanitarian dialogues should be opened, when possible, with non-state actors, who, under international humanitarian law and the *Principles*, also have responsibilities to provide protection and assistance to IDPs. Should the government not be in a position to initiate such dialogue, it should be encouraged to seek the support of outside actors such as the UN, NGOs or church groups to help open humanitarian space in politically protracted situations, such as in Colombia and Mexico. The protection and assistance of IDPs would benefit from efforts to open such humanitarian space.

The *Framework of Action* also contains recommendations on how regional and international efforts can reinforce national responsibility for IDPs in the Americas. Since these are beyond the scope of today's event, I will provide all of you with copies of the *Framework* so that you can read it at your leisure.

How the Handbook Can Be Utilized to Promote the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Peru

In closing, I would like to say a few words about the *Handbook*. This *Handbook*, which is being published by the Peruvian Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, was developed by the Brookings Project to implement the *Principles* in the field. First published in English in 1999 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and our Project, it provides practical direction to field personnel on the actual steps they can take on behalf of displaced persons. In order to facilitate the *Handbook*'s use in the Americas, the Brookings Project supported its translation into *Spanish* and the dissemination of over 2,000 copies to actors concerned with displaced persons throughout the Americas. In the Peruvian *Handbook*, which you have today, you will find the text of the law on internal displacement in Annex 2 (page 61).

The *Handbook*, I would again emphasize, provides guidance to all persons including IDP organizations who are seeking to implement the standards set forth in the *Principles* at the local level. It provides an explanation of each *Principle* and suggests a series of practical steps which can be taken to ensure that these standards are met. There are many ways in which the *Principles* and *Handbook* can be used to promote the rights of the displaced. Together they offer a framework for understanding displacement and identifying the needs of the displaced. They are also a "monitoring tool" that can measure conditions on the ground for IDPs. They can serve as a capacity building tool for IDPs, in that, both the *Principles* and *Handbook* teach IDPs about their rights and give them ideas on how to empower themselves. Lastly, the *Principles* can be used as a tool for raising visibility of IDP concerns and advocating on their behalf.

I encourage all of you to familiarize yourselves with the contents of the *Handbook*. I believe you will find that the *Principles* will contribute to and reinforce your efforts to improve the treatment and conditions of the internally displaced. I also look forward to discussing with you how the *Handbook* can be best be utilized to further our common goal of seeking durable solutions for the internally displaced in Peru.

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¹ This statement is based on the following documents: Regional Seminar on Internal Displacement in the Americas, Government of Mexico, Office of the RSG on IDPs and the Brookings Institution-Johns Hopkins SAIS Project on Internal Displacement (July 2004), Finding Durable Solutions for IDPs: Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and International Experiences of Voluntary Return, Resettlement and Reintegration, presentation by Gimena Sanchez-Garzoli (December 2003) and The Guiding Principles: how do they support IDP response strategies?, presentation by Roberta Cohen, Response Strategies of the Internally Displaced: Changing the Humanitarian Lens, Oslo, Norway (November 2001).