



WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2011

BACKGROUND NOTE

THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE OF FINDING DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

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This note discusses the development challenge of finding durable solutions for refugees and IDPs, and the relevance of this challenge for the WDR on securing development in fragile and conflict affected settings. The note will describe (i) the scale, trends, and impact of forced displacement, (ii) the development challenge of finding durable solutions for those displaced, (iii) current practice on addressing this development challenge, (iv) the connections between the political, security and developmental aspects of forced displacement including regional spillover and impacts, and (v) suggestions as to what governments and the international development community can do in order to move beyond humanitarian emergency assistance and contribute to durable solutions for refugees and IDPs in return or displacement situations.

1. The scale, trends, and impacts of forced displacement

Globally, there were, by the end of 2009, about 42.3 million people who had been forced to leave or flee their homes due to conflict, violence, and human rights violations. Of these around 15.2 million people were refugees outside their country of nationality or country of habitual residence, while another 27.1 million were internally displaced persons (IDPs), who had not crossed an international border.

While the number of people in forced displacement has fluctuated over the past decades, the overall scale of displacement has remained consistently high.

Figure 1: IDMC Global Overview 2009¹



During 2009, at least 6.8 million people were forced to become IDPs as a result of conflict, violence and human rights violations in 23 countries (an increase of 2.2 million compared with 2008), while around five million IDPs were reported to have returned (compared to 2.6 million in 2008).² By the end of 2006,

¹ This graph is from: IDMC: [Internal Displacement Global Overview of Trends and Developments](#), May 2010, p.14.

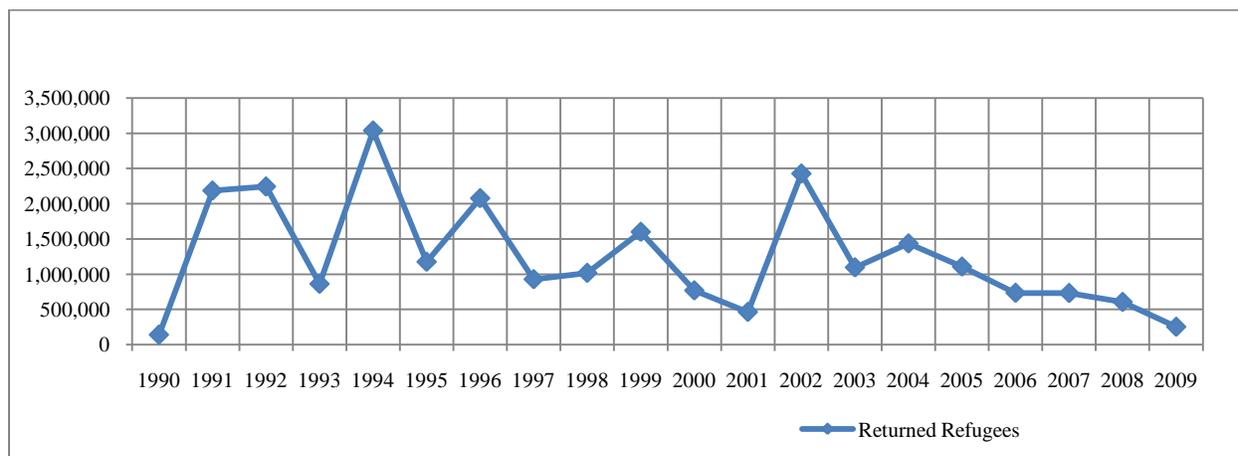
² IDMC: [Internal Displacement Global Overview of Trends and Developments](#), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Switzerland, May 2010; p.14.

there were around 9.9 million refugees under UNHCR responsibility, and this number increased to 10.5 million by the end of 2009 (not including some 4.7 million Palestinian refugees under the mandate of UNRWA).³

Over the last decade, most of the armed conflicts were civil wars. According to statistics compiled by the Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) in 2008, there were 35 civil wars and only 1 interstate war during this period.⁴ Consequently, forced displacement in the past decade has been primarily caused by internal armed conflicts rather than international conflicts. This trend has been accompanied by an increase in internal displacement. Thus, while the number of refugees remained relatively stable during 2009⁵, over 6.8 million people became IDPs.⁶

There is a growing number of both refugees (5.7 million in 29 situations constituting 54 % of the refugees under UNHCR protection)⁷ and IDPs (35 situations comprising most of the IDPs) in protracted displacement situations,⁸ which call for development interventions to assist the displaced achieve sustainable solutions and to mitigate the impact of displacement on host communities. At the same time, the large-scale repatriation movements observed in the past have diminished, and return figures have dropped since 2004 with current levels being the second-lowest in 15 years.⁹

Figure 2: Returned Refugees (1990-2009)¹⁰



The return from displacement, however, does not in itself ensure sustainable economic and social reintegration. Often returnees are not able to go back to their areas of origin, and even where they can, these areas frequently have limited economic growth and few economic opportunities since they are characterized by the legacy of past conflict or by ongoing low level conflict. Consequently, the caseload in need of assistance to reintegrate and reestablish their lives would at any given point in time comprise not just the current and last year's returnees, but also many of those that came earlier and are still

³ UNHCR: [2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced Persons and Stateless People](#), June 2010

⁴ <http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/Armed-Conflicts-Version-X-2009/>

⁵ UNHCR: [2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced Persons and Stateless People](#), June 2010

⁶ IDMC: [Internal Displacement Global Overview of Trends and Developments](#), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Switzerland, May 2010; p.14.

⁷ If the Palestinian refugees under UNRWA assistance are included, 68% of the refugees in the world are in protracted displacement situations.

⁸ UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as one where 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more in a given asylum country ([2008 Global Trends](#), p.7). Since there is a number of situations, where fewer than 25,000 refugees have been in exile longer than five years, the UNHCR assessment that 5.7 million or 54% of the refugees under its protection are in protracted situations appear to be on the low side. IDMC assesses that the 35 protracted IDP displacement situations account for most of the IDPs worldwide, but emphasizes the difficulties in arriving at concise numbers, particularly in countries with both protracted and new displacement (IDMC: [Global Overview 2008](#), April 2009, p.14).

⁹ Only some 251,000 refugees repatriated voluntarily during 2009. [2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced Persons and Stateless People](#), UNHCR, June 2010.

¹⁰ Prepared based on UNHCR-provided data.

struggling to reestablish livelihoods, access social services, and regain lost property.¹¹ Similar constraints often affect the sustainable return of IDPs.

While forced displacement is a humanitarian crisis, it also has significant developmental impacts affecting human and social capital, economic growth, poverty reduction efforts, and environmental sustainability. Forced displacement has an important bearing on meeting the MDGs, since displaced populations tend to be the poorest and often experience particularly difficult access to basic services. In fragile and conflict affected countries displacement strains weak institutions, and in these as well as in countries with more robust governance frameworks it can become a breeding ground for crime, conflict, and instability¹². At the same time, the presence of displaced groups is not invariably negative, and they can make positive contributions to the host community and create opportunities that may benefit both the displaced and their hosts. Both in return situations and in protracted displacement situations where return is not possible, the activities required to promote sustainable solutions for either refugees or IDPs need to go beyond humanitarian assistance and address the development issues associated with reintegration, service delivery, livelihood restoration, and governance. Forced displacement therefore constitutes a significant development challenge for the countries with refugees and IDPs, and for the international community.

2. The development challenge of forced displacement

The disappearance of its immediate causes (e.g. end of fighting), or return from displacement does not in itself ensure durable economic and social reintegration. From a development perspective, the question “when displacement ends” has to do with the barriers to and the conditions and processes that underpin durable solutions, and by implication, the development activities that are necessary to achieve such solutions.

The key barriers to durable solutions for refugees and IDPs, which at the same time constitute the critical development challenges, are fourfold:

- *Rights to land, property and houses* that belonged to the displaced are in many return situations contested, or the assets of the returnees have been taken over by others.
- *Livelihoods* are disrupted or dependent on humanitarian aid, and livelihood rehabilitation is critical if solutions to displacement are to become sustainable, both if the displaced return home or if they have to integrate elsewhere.
- *Delivery of services* such as security, education and health along with basic infrastructure are frequently inadequate or absent both in places of exile and upon return.
- *Accountable and responsive governance* and rule of law are often weak particularly at the local level, government capacity is limited, its legitimacy damaged, and social capital at the community level is impaired.

3. Current practice on addressing the development challenge of forced displacement

¹¹ No global estimates exist of this caseload of returnees in need of reintegration assistance, and their situation would vary from country to country and even between regions within a particular country. In places such as Sudan, Afghanistan, and Burundi it can be assumed, that a large part of the displaced that returned over the past few years are still in need of assistance to achieve durable reintegration. For Southern Sudan, see the *Evaluation of UNHCR's returnee reintegration programme in Southern Sudan*, September 2008 (PDES/2008/05) and *Sudan: A profile of the internal displacement situation*, IDMC, May 2010. In Afghanistan, more than 4 million refugees are estimated to have returned since 2002, but the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy Progress Report* (August 2009) found that support for durable reintegration for returning refugees or IDPs had been extremely modest. For Burundi see the *Impact Evaluation of PRM humanitarian assistance to the repatriation and reintegration of Burundi refugees (2003-2007)* by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration of the US Department of State, September, 2008.

¹² An example of this is the way that the support in Pakistan for Afghan refugee involvement in the resistance in Afghanistan during the 1980s against the Communist regime and its Soviet backers created conditions within Pakistan that radicalized sections of the population, led to a proliferation of arms, and weakened government authority. Another example is the way that obstacles to returnee reintegration in parts of Southern Sudan (e.g. in Jonglei State or parts of Equatoria) have contributed to conflict and instability, which in turn adds to state fragility (*The long road home: Opportunities and obstacles to the reintegration of IDPs and refugees returning to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas*, ODI, London, September 2008).

In the international community, the idea of moving beyond emergency humanitarian assistance by using targeted development assistance to support durable solutions for displaced people is not new.¹³ In the 1980s, UNHCR promoted the concept of *Refugee Aid and Development*, which was applied in both the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) in 1981 and 1984, and the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Central America (CIREFCA) in 1989. In 1999 the issue was taken up again through the so-called *Brookings process*, which set out to define a new way of addressing the relief to development transition of forced displacement. In 2003, the approach was revived as part of the *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern* comprising the three tools of (i) Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR), (ii) the 4Rs of Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction, and (iii) Development through Local Integration (DLI).¹⁴ UNHCR's DAR initiative was driven by the need to address the long-term economic and social impacts of displacement on host communities, and the 4Rs initiative was based on the understanding that in post-conflict situations, the development needs of refugees and returnees have not systematically been incorporated in transition and recovery plans by the concerned governments, the donor community, and the UN system.

Implementing these initiatives to address the needs for sustainable solutions for displaced populations did require additional development resources together with broad-based partnerships between governments, and humanitarian as well as multi- and bilateral development agencies. However, since donors offered limited additional funding for activities promoting durable solutions for refugees, and refugee hosting nations made limited commitments to durable solutions through self-sufficiency and local integration these initiatives were ultimately short-lived.¹⁵

The introduction of the cluster approach in early 2006, comprising the Early Recovery Cluster led by UNDP, is based on the same recognition that development principles have to be applied early on to humanitarian situations to stabilize local and national capacities from further deterioration, so that they can provide the foundation for full recovery and support durable solutions for IDPs within areas of return or settlement elsewhere in the country.¹⁶ The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in its *Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2008* notes that while it is still early days to consider the impact on IDPs of the humanitarian reform measures, the whole cluster approach has resulted in strengthened predictability, response capacity, coordination and accountability.¹⁷

Yet, assistance to refugees and IDPs appear to continue to be viewed primarily as a humanitarian rather than a development issue on the assumption that once the initial crisis stabilizes and immediate needs are met, longer-term solutions will be found to address the plight of the displaced.¹⁸ This ignores the around 54% of the world's refugees under UNHCR protection that are in protracted displacement situations, and that refugee return alone does not constitute a durable solution for the returnees. Similarly, the IDMC review found that international attention to internal displacement still tends to fade following the initial emergency phase, and that longer-term support tends to decline and become less predictable as

¹³ Regarding the engagement by the World Bank in addressing forced displacement see [Forced Displacement – Overview of the World Bank Portfolio](#), Social Development Notes No. 122, November 2009, and [Forced Displacement – The development Challenge](#), Social Development Department, December 2009.

¹⁴ *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, UNHCR Core Group on Durable Solutions, Geneva, May 2003, p.3. At: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4124b6a04.html>.

¹⁵ A. Betts: *Development assistance and refugees: Towards a North-South grand bargain?*, Forced Migration Policy Briefing 2, Refugees Studies Centre, Univ. of Oxford, June 2009, p.6-8.

¹⁶ One element of the Early Recovery Cluster approach involves the integration of the displaced in areas of displacement through CDD and area-wide operations that also include the resident population in order to provide equitable development benefits for both the displaced and host communities.

¹⁷ At the end of 2008, there were globally 24 complex conflict emergencies that were addressed through the cluster approach (IDMC: [Global Overview 2008](#), April 2009, p.32).

¹⁸ Betts, 2009, p.4.

displacement situations become protracted. Moreover, post-emergency and development support has tended not to target IDPs as a distinct group and so has often failed to meet their specific needs.¹⁹

4. The political economy context for developmental responses to forced displacement

The scope for finding durable solutions to displacement is critically influenced by the political economy conditions, which frame the opportunities and constraints for pursuing such solutions. Refugees and IDPs are often hosted in remote parts of developing (and often poor) countries. Furthermore, refugees in many countries face restrictive asylum regulations which limit their freedom of movement and access to education, skills training and productive livelihoods. Their potential for human growth and development is stifled. Therefore, the need for development assistance to address the long-term economic and social impacts of displacement cannot be overstated. This notwithstanding, there is frequently reluctance on the part of development actors to consider the development needs of refugees, IDPs, and returnees. Such reluctance can often be attributed to three factors: (a) that refugees are not part of the host government's political constituency, and are therefore not included in national development plans, (b) that refugees are often located in remote areas, which are not a priority for the host government²⁰, (c) and as a result, the low prospects for support by host governments for local integration of refugees reinforce the reluctance by development actors to advocate interventions that support this as a durable solution.

The other political economy context is the regional dimension of displacement. Refugees from Afghanistan are in Pakistan and Iran, refugees from Sudan are in Kenya, Uganda, Chad and the Central African Republic (while there are refugees from Chad and CAR in Sudan), and refugees from Iraq are in Syria and Jordan. Solutions to the major protracted refugee situations call for regional approaches, involving agreements between multiple stakeholders who may have widely differing priorities and views on what constitutes a lasting solution to a refugee crisis.

Post-emergency and development support tend not to target IDPs as a separate group and has therefore often failed to meet their specific needs.²¹ The willingness or ability of development actors to consider activities that could support early recovery involving durable solutions for IDPs may be influenced by (a) the lack of government control over areas of IDP origin and the consequent inability of the government to protect and assist IDP return,²² (b) the denial by governments that conflict induced displacement exists within the country and therefore that IDPs should be considered eligible for assistance,²³ (c) the consequent refusal of cooperation or the imposition of serious bureaucratic obstacles on the international community's ability to assist IDPs, (d) the focus in most national laws and policies on IDP return to areas of origin as the only option for a durable solution,²⁴ and (e) the gaps that exist between policies and practice as well as institutional arrangements in many countries especially in relation to durable solutions.²⁵

Some of the challenges of assisting the recovery of displaced populations are shared across post-conflict and post-natural disaster situations. However, in its global overview of trends and developments in 2008, IDMC found that the international response to displacement caused by natural disasters was in most cases

¹⁹ *Global Overview 2008*, April 2009, p.11, 27 and 31.

²⁰ *Framework for Durable Solutions*, UNHCR, Geneva, May 2003, p.5.

²¹ *Global Overview 2008*, IDMC, Switzerland, April 2009, p.31.

²² Countries which lack control over IDP areas of origin are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Chad, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Cyprus, DRC, Ethiopia, Georgia, Mexico, Nepal, Philippines, Senegal, Serbia, and Syria (*Global Overview 2008*, IDMC, Switzerland, April 2009, p. 26).

²³ In eight countries namely, Ethiopia, Indonesia (in Papua), Israel (including OPT), Burma, Sudan (Darfur), Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe, the displacement of an aggregate of around 4 million IDPs is not acknowledged by the national authorities (*Global Overview 2008*, IDMC, Switzerland, April 2009, p. 28).

²⁴ The UN and civil society entities have long advocated a broader notion of durable solutions, and in Georgia, the government in 2007 after years of exclusive emphasis on return, committed to facilitate local integration in its strategy on IDPs (Ibid, p.29).

²⁵ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kälin: addendum: high-level conference on "Ten years of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement - achievements and future challenges"* (Oslo, 16 and 17 October 2008): summary of the Conference Chair, 11 February 2009, p. 4, (A/HRC/10/13/Add.3), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49abc0d2.html>.

better organized than that addressing conflict induced displacement. This was due to different combinations of factors such as better government capacity in disaster affected countries compared to those affected by complex conflict situations, better (safer) physical access, and fewer political barriers compared to conflict situations where humanitarian space may be denied by both the government and insurgent groups.²⁶ So, while conflicts and disasters have each generated huge numbers of IDPs globally, the development challenge of economically and socially sustainable recovery posed by conflict induced displacement is even more intricate than in the case of natural disasters.

5. Strengthening the approach to support durable solutions for refugees and IDPs.

The situation outlined above indicates that there are critical gaps in the response to forced displacement on the part of both governments and international actors. The persistence of these gaps seems to reflect general gaps in international post-conflict recovery efforts and the need for political will among all stakeholders – concerned governments as well as bilateral and multi-lateral donors – regarding concrete actions in the following areas:²⁷

1. Early formulation of a shared (country or regional level) recovery strategy that takes the political economy context into consideration and encompasses political, security, development, and humanitarian tools to guide the efforts of bilateral and multilateral international actors dealing with a particular government.
2. Ensuring the availability of quickly available and flexible funding that can provide resources in response to early windows of opportunity for development interventions that support durable solutions for displaced within the broader recovery effort.
3. Conducting assessments and joint follow-up actions to address the capacity gaps with regard to human resources and systems for planning and implementation in governments that are in early recovery situations.

At the same time, some initial steps have already been taken to address the gaps. In October 2007, the leaders of the multilateral development banks (MDBs) issued a statement on deepening their collaboration in fragile situations, and in October 2008 the UN and the World Bank agreed on a partnership framework for crisis and post-crisis situations which emphasizes the complementary roles of the two organizations in supporting early and sustainable recovery during and after crises. There are also internationally agreed instruments such as the Post-Conflict Needs Assessment that provide a methodology used by national and international actors as an entry point for conceptualizing, negotiating, and financing a common shared strategy for recovery and development in fragile and post -conflict settings.

This notwithstanding, there continues to be a lack of early and comprehensive planning of transitions from humanitarian to development interventions that addresses the development challenges of forced displacement, and of adequate resources to support operations that promote durable solutions for the displaced. Addressing these issues requires a paradigmatic shift, not in conceptualization of the already available policies and arrangements, but in the way they are applied by governments and international aid agencies. The shift in thinking that is required has to do with putting into practice the recognition, that if development interventions in fragile and conflict affected settings are to contribute to the kind of broad-based poverty reduction and growth which will reduce societal vulnerability to conflict, these interventions must be both inclusive and address the specific needs of vulnerable groups such as refugees

²⁶ IDMC, Switzerland, April 2009, p.33.

²⁷ The recommendations draw on [Recovering from War: Gaps in International Action](#) by the New York University's Center on International Cooperation. The report was based on analysis of the six cases of Sudan, Afghanistan, Haiti, East Timor, Lebanon, and Nepal, and was presented at the DFID hosted *International Meeting on International Support for Post-Conflict Stabilization and early Recovery* held in London on July 11, 2008.

and IDPs (together with their host communities where applicable) in order to diminish the inter-group and spatial inequalities that are often at the root of conflict.