



Internal Displacement and the Threats to Human Security

CONCEPT NOTE

29 Feb 2008

Summary

The Africa Human Security Initiative (AHSI), a network of several African non-governmental organisations working on peace and conflict in Africa, is organising a consultative workshop for researchers, government officials, human rights activists, regional and sub-regional officials and members of the donor community who work on matters that affect displaced persons. Though the problem of internal displacement is widespread on the continent, the workshop is designed to target members of the Greater Horn of Africa (the 7 IGAD) countries at large [Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda].

The aim of this consultative workshop is three-fold. First: to discuss and debate the threats to human security posed by internal displacement and how this deters achievement of the millennium development goals; secondly, to discuss the building of sustainable capacity in [Greater Horn of Africa] to respond to the plight of displaced citizens; and thirdly, to develop a proposed strategy and an action plan for a sustainable and respectful process of building the capacity of public institutions to prepare measures for managing displacement.

The workshop will take place in Nairobi from 9:00 am to 16:00pm on 7th May 2008 and it is envisaged that **40 participants** will attend.

The problem of internal displacement and human insecurity in Africa

Field research, case studies and many advocacy efforts have established and conveyed the dire conditions of internally displaced persons¹. Even though, pinning the concept down has remained problematic as there is an unresolved conceptual and operational debate relating to the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. Irrespective of how they are uprooted—be it by war or climatic changes—such groups are usually ignored because the people concerned, the victims, are often

¹See “Internal displacement: ‘Internal refugees’ or ‘unlucky citizens?’” An examination of recent developments and conceptual challenges in protecting and assisting internally displaced persons, MIGS Seminar

marginalized –the majority of them are poor and thus vulnerable to abuse by the more powerful groups and at times, by the state itself.

Francis Deng, the former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons [IDPs], recognized that protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in many parts of the world “is still a neglected concern, or an unfulfilled aspiration, at best”. Even though Deng criticised the international response to internal displacement as being “ad hoc, limited and unsatisfactory” ten years ago, nothing concrete yet has changed when it comes to the welfare of IDPs. The development of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement succeeded in drawing global attention to mobilising action towards the issue, but still, much is yet to be translated into action. For instance, the principles explicitly call on governments to provide protection for women and girls and safeguard them from gender specific violence and uphold their rights, but this work is largely carried out by agencies other than governments. In all areas where there are IDPs, there are numerous reports of sexual violence in IDP camp settings. And for women, poverty and the lack of income generating activities pushes them into prostitution. Disruption of lives in general forces families to drastically alter their ways and forces them to share their lives and what are usually private spaces with other strangers.

The human rights violations that lead to displacement and the appalling living conditions of the displaced thus call for a combined human rights and needs based approach to tackling the problem.

Estimated figures for IDPs in the [Greater Horn of Africa] show how widespread the intensity of the phenomenon is. For instance, the total number of IDPs in just three countries outweighed the total no of refugees by a wide margin in the five countries in 2004 (see table below). The recent spate of violence in Kenya saw this number, 382 000, treble within a six week period (January to mid-February 2008). These IDPs, as with all displaced persons elsewhere, face danger during their flight, in the temporary displacement centres, and they tend to continue to face problems after their return to their homes. Host communities often tend to pose problems for those who fled or towards new settlers.

EAC Displacement

Country	IDPs	Refugees	Total affected population
Burundi	432 818	28 800	461 618
DRC	2 045 000	361 720	2 406 720
Tanzania	n/a	543 145	543 145
Uganda	535 107	175 819	710 926
Kenya	382 000 ²	251 000	633 000

² Kenya’s IDP figures have always been contested. In September 2004, the Kenya Human Rights Commission argued that there could be more than 600 000 IDPs in the country. UNOCHA uses a figure of 360 000 that was taken from a December 2002 report. Much of the disputation arises from the definition of

Total	3 012 925	1 143 418	4 156 343
Source:	UN	“Great Lakes	Region”

<http://www.unsystem.org/SCN/archives/rnis38/ch04.htm> p2

Internally displaced persons are defined as persons “who have been forced or obliged to flee or 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” (Deng and Cohen, 1998b:18). This definition focuses on the *coercive* or *involuntary* nature of the displacement, and that the displacement takes place *within national borders*. And whilst this definition would expect states to shoulder the responsibility of easing the plight of IDPs, the very opposite happens as many states simply bury their heads in the sand. A good example can be found amongst **Pastoralist communities** whose displacement is caused by many factors such as massive movements triggered by climatic changes and the breakdown in traditional governance and norms guiding the use of water and pastures. At the same time, insensitive bureaucrats and centralized governance have further alienated these pastoral communities.

Though this definition explains displacement due to natural disaster or development projects, the majority of research and policy work relating to internal displacement has focused on those displaced due to human rights violations or conflict. IDPs, due to their vulnerability, are the largest ‘at risk’ population in Africa and elsewhere requiring special forms of protection and assistance that the national and international community largely fail to provide adequately. Much of the sluggishness surrounding the issue has to do with queries relating to the conceptualization of the issue. However, cultural interpretations too have contributed to inaction on the part of African bureaucracies as governments tend to expect IDPs to fend for themselves with the assistance of relatives or members of their families. A factor that compounds the problem is that the Guiding Principles are not binding on governments or international actors even though they bring together the relevant aspects of human rights, humanitarian and refugee law to “provide the basis for international concern with the problems of the internally displaced”. During a massive clean up operation of one African city, one African president remarked that “Everyone came from somewhere, so you must go back there.” This sums up the abuse of the extended family system and yet the real problem is the lack of government capacity and political will to manage crises and the general neglect and disrespect for human rights.

Many non-state agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in particular, mandated themselves to respond to the plight of IDPs. As these agencies deal with emergency situations, such interventions are usually not long term even though they are appreciated. ICRC’s advocacy work in lobbying for inclusion into

who qualifies to be an IDP. See The Profile of Internal Displacement : Kenya, Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project, Nov 30.

national legislation preventive measures that trigger displacement is an endeavour that requires complementing.

Key questions

This workshop will seek to address the following key questions:

- Who qualifies to be an IDP? And What are the triggers of internal displacement in the region?
- What is the state of research on human security and internal displacement and how can more rigorous and objective research be undertaken in this regard?
- How can sustainable government capacity on issues related to human security and internal displacement be developed in the region?
- What roles can AHSI, research organisations, activists and universities play in the enhancement of capacity for managing internal displacement?

Building capacity for managing IDPs in the Greater Horn

The seminar will focus on analysing and evaluating efforts that have been undertaken on human security and internal displacement issues in the Greater Horn OF AFRICA which extends as far as the Great Lakes region. In addition, it will seek to ascertain the relative strengths, weaknesses and gaps of the administrative capabilities of relevant organisations (both government and civil society) in those states that have high numbers of IDPs.

The aim of this meeting will be to provide a consultative forum for key researchers, relevant government representatives from the Greater Horn countries, representatives from organisations working with refugees and IDPS. The workshop will have 3 key presentations and 3 discussants. These will be followed by plenary discussions. Presentations will be made by a select group of researchers and practitioners working with IDPs. These will be largely drawn from organisations working on human security.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the workshop are as follows:

- To map out the extent of internal displacement in the Greater Horn of Africa and its impact on the quality of life of the victims
- To discuss definitional issues that hinder government and international efforts in establishing a body with the sole mandate of overseeing IDPs
- To discuss and assess government capacity in responding to the problem of IDPs
- To develop a regional and sub-regional policy document that focuses on preparedness for handling IDP emergency situations and identifying realistic strategies for responding to and managing displacement crises

Participants and experts:

It is anticipated that the seminar will be for one full day and will be attended by approximately 40 participants. It is anticipated that experts will be drawn from some of the following organisations:

- ITDG-Practical Action
- Min of Special Programmes
- Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR)
- UN agencies- UNHCR, UNDP
- Refugee Consortium of Kenya
- International Rescue Committee
- Government Refugee Council, Ministry of Migration
- EAC Secretariat
- International Committee of the Red Cross
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- Prime Minister's Office – Ministry for Disaster Preparedness
- Kenya Human Rights Commission
- UN Disaster Prevention, Management and Coordination Unit (DPMCU)
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)
- IGAD Secretariat

Outputs

This workshop will result in the following outputs:

- A regional and sub-regional policy document that focuses on preparedness for handling IDP emergency situations and identifying realistic strategies. This will be channelled to the EAC, the AU and relevant state departments.
- A strategic action plan to build and strengthen the capacity of research institutions and NGOs to undertake rigorous and objective research on human security and IDPS in the region. The action plan will include a series of research topics and research questions that can be pursued by the research community in question.
- A workshop report, which will include a summary of the presentations, discussions and decisions from the workshop.

Organisational Information

AHSI

AHSI is composed of organizations that took the initiative to emphasize human security in Africa. **The Current African Human Security Initiative Partners are:** African Peace Forum (APFO), South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA), Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA), Southern Africa Human Rights Trust (SAHRIT), West African Network for Peace-building (WANEP), African Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR), Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and University for Peace in Africa (UPEACE).

AHSI 2 is a follow up project to the AHSI 1. The latter provided for a core network of seven established African Non-Governmental Organisations that benchmarked

the performance of eight African governments in respect of broad human security issues. This was measured against the commitments taken at the level of the African Union heads of state meetings and thus served as a process of complementary peer review to that of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD's) African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

The **project purpose of AHSI 2** is to use the opportunity created by the peer review concept to complement the formal NEPAD APRM process by focusing on the criminal justice system in selected countries identified for APRM review. Through this process, AHSI 2 will build the capacity of an expanded membership and local partners to undertake research on security issues with the eventual purpose that this could facilitate work orientated towards the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

Through timing outputs to inform and complement the APRM process in each country, the AHSI 2 will exploit the opportunity to broaden the application of the APRM approach and principles to those areas currently outside the focus of the Review.

Aims of the project are:

1. To complement the work of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism in areas not covered by it and to mimic the formal APRM process in its methodology and in the development of appropriate implementation frameworks to support the implementation of national commitments and obligations.
2. To provide governments with empirical evidence on the status of criminal justice and its impact on political processes in their countries. This involves working with them in the development of a set of realistic and informed recommendations for each area to help bridge gaps between national commitment and implementation.
3. To identify the structural and other inherent weaknesses in the criminal justice systems, encourage policy dialogue and public awareness of the broader implications of crime on the consolidation of democracy.
4. To support the development and build capacity amongst a core network of partners in an area where civil society organisations are traditionally the weakest in Africa – content work on crime and justice matters.