Internal displacement: global trends in conflict-induced displacement

Nina M. Birkeland

Nina M. Birkeland is the head of the Monitoring and Advocacy Department at the Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

Abstract

At the end of 2008, the number of people internally displaced by conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations across the world stood at 26 million, a record high since the IDMC started to monitor internal displacement in 1998. This high figure remains in spite of the growing recognition and implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. This article presents the findings of the latest IDMC survey on trends in internal displacement, challenges faced by displaced populations, and the measures taken to address these.

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Global trends

At the end of 2008, there were 26 million people worldwide who had been internally displaced by conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations.[1] The figures alone do not give much insight into the long-term plight and daily problems of internally displaced persons (IDPs), but they do provide measurable indicators of the challenge which internal displacement continues to pose to humanitarian and development organizations as well as human rights defenders. Despite ever-wider recognition of the Guiding Principles on Internal

491

Displacement[2] and their progressive adoption into national and regional frameworks, and improvement to international response mechanisms within the humanitarian reform process, the global IDP figure stands at the same record high level as at the end of 2007. Internal displacement has continued in many countries to result from failures by parties to armed conflicts to respect the rights of civilian populations, including by taking necessary steps to prevent displacement.

Global figures and hotspots

At the end of 2008, the global IDP figure of an estimated 26 million reflects the new displacement of 4.6 million people,[3] as well as an equivalent decrease in the number of IDPs as a result of the revision of some national figures or the achievement of durable solutions. There were 900,000 more people newly displaced in 2008 than in 2007, when 3.7 million people were newly displaced. Many IDPs found other durable solutions than return: integration in their place of displacement, or settlement elsewhere in the country. In some countries IDPs were deregistered, and elsewhere estimates of their numbers were amended.

Five countries had larger IDP populations than any other, of which the top four remained the same as at the end of 2007 (Table 1). The top three – Sudan, Colombia and Iraq – together accounted for 45% of the world's IDPs. The number of IDPs in Somalia rose to 1.3 million following a year of sustained conflict, while the number in Uganda fell below the 1 million mark as return movements continued.

When looking at the proportion of IDPs out of the total national population, two types of situations emerged: the very large IDP populations in Somalia, Sudan, Iraq and Colombia made up at least 10% of the entire population of each

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1   This article is a summary of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) publication *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2008*, IDMC, Geneva, April 2009, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/resources.nsf/(httpPublications)/ 0605361027488A28C12575A90042305B?OpenDocument (visited 7 September 2009).

2   *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, UN Doc. E/CN./4/1998/53/Add.2, 17 April 1998, reprinted in *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 324, September 1998, pp. 545–556. Concern over the vulnerability of IDPs led the UN Commission on Human Rights to ask the Representative on IDPs, Francis Deng, to examine the extent to which existing international law provides adequate coverage for IDPs (1992), and to develop an appropriate framework for IDPs (1996). Accordingly, the Representative, with the support of a team of international legal experts, formulated the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, which were presented to the Commission in 1998.

3   Note on figures: Producing reliable figures on conflict-induced internal displacement in politically sensitive contexts is challenging. In most countries affected by internal displacement, existing data on IDPs are often incomplete, unreliable, out of date or inaccurate. Disaggregated data are only available in a few countries. Arriving at a commonly agreed numbers of IDPs implies government recognition of the displacement crisis, and a complex identification and registration of IDPs who are often mixed with other affected populations. The best-quality data are normally available for the number of displaced, whereas figures on return or other durable solutions are systematically more incomplete or totally unavailable. IDMC seeks and compiles data from national governments, UN and international organizations, national and international NGOs, human rights organizations and the media. IDMC also carries out field missions to a number of countries every year.

Table 1. Countries with most IDPs at the end of 2008

Country	IDPs at the end of 2008
Sudan	4,900,000
Colombia	2,650,000–4,360,000
Iraq	2,840,000
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	1,400,000
Somalia	1,300,000

Table 2. Countries with most IDPs as a percentage of their population

Country	IDPs as percentage of population
Cyprus	Up to 23%
Somalia	13%
Sudan	12.4%
Iraq	9.6%
Colombia	5.7–9.3%
Zimbabwe	4.2–7.4%
Azerbaijan	6.7–7.1%
Georgia	5.7–6.3%
Lebanon	2–9%

country. A number of smaller countries also had relatively large IDP situations in terms of population percentage, notably including Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Zimbabwe and Lebanon (Table 2).

New displacements and returns in 2008

In total, new displacement occurred in 24 of the 52 countries monitored and reported on by IDMC. Of these, ten countries had new large-scale displacements of at least 200,000 people (see Table 3). Of these, only the displacement in Kenya and in India followed a new outbreak of violence; in Georgia (South Ossetia), there was a new development in that it was the first time that Russia had been a direct party to the conflict. The other new displacements were related to causes that had been ongoing before 2008.

Large scale returns of 200,000 people or more were reported in five countries: Uganda, DRC, Sudan, Kenya and the Philippines (Table 4). All of these

Table 3. New large-scale displacements reported

Country	New displacement in 2008
Philippines	600,000
Sudan	550,000 (315,000 in Darfur, 187,000 in Southern Sudan and 50,000 in Abyei)
Kenya	500,000
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	At least 400,000
Iraq	360,000
Pakistan	Over 310,000
Somalia	300,000
Colombia	270,000 to June 2008
Sri Lanka	230,000
India	Over 220,000

countries except Uganda are also among the list above of countries with new large-scale displacements. The largest reported return movement in relation to the size of the displaced population took place in Timor-Leste, where the IDP figure fell by two-thirds in 2008. Likewise, in the Central African Republic (CAR) the number nearly halved, while in Uganda the downward trend continued from 2007, with the IDP figure falling from 1.3 million to below 900,000 by the end of 2008.

Protracted displacement and ongoing conflicts

A definition of protracted displacement was agreed upon by parti-cipants at a 2007 expert seminar on protracted IDP situations, hosted by UNHCR and the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement: 'Protracted internal displace-ment situations are those in which the processes of finding durable solutions have stalled and/or IDPs are marginalised as a consequence of violations or a lack of protection of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.' Factors such as the amount of time in displacement or the number of people affected are not a primary consideration in determining whether a situation is protracted.[4]

The majority of the IDPs worldwide live in such situations. It is difficult to assess their number, particularly in countries where both protracted and new

4   The Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement/University of Bern, *Expert Seminar on protracted IDP situations*, Seminar report from seminar hosted by UNHCR and Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, Geneva, 21–22 June 2007, p. 2, available at http://www.brookings.edu/events/2007/∼/media/Files/events/2007/0621_displacement/20070621_displacement.pdf, visited 14 September 2009.

Table 4. Return movements reported

Country	Returns reported in 2008
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	At least 400,000
Uganda	400,000
Sudan	350,000 (in Southern Sudan)
Kenya	300,000
Philippines	250,000
Iraq	167,000
Sri Lanka	126,000
Georgia	96,000
Cote d'Ivoire	89,000
Central African Republic (CAR)	85,000
Timor-Leste	80,000
Yemen	55,000–90,000

displacement is present, but IDMC's survey found that at least 35 countries have a significant number of IDPs in this situation. Their plight is often overshadowed by new and high-profile crises. For example, in the August 2008 conflict between Russian and Georgian forces, the situation of people displaced since the 1990s was overlooked in favour of the people affected by the new displacement crisis.

The second-largest proportion of internal displacement situations are caused by ongoing conflicts, and characterized by significant new displacements and returns. This phenomenon is present in the top five countries with the largest reported IDP populations: Sudan, Colombia, Iraq, DRC and Somalia.

Displacement by region

In 2008, the number of IDPs in Africa was the lowest recorded in this decade. With the exception of Europe and Central Asia, the number of IDPs increased in all other regions. South and South-East Asia was the region with the largest relative increase in the IDP population (Table 5).

Africa

Africa's record lowest figure for this decade, at 11.6 million people, represented an enormously positive development for a region that has always had a larger number of IDPs than any other. Three out of five of the world's largest internal

Table 5. IDP estimates by region (end of 2008)

Region	Countries monitored	IDPs (million)	Change from end of 2007
Africa	19	11.6	−9%
Americas	4	4.5	+7%
Middle East	6	3.9	+11%
South and South-East Asia	10	3.5	+13%
Europe and Central Asia	13	2.5	0%
Total	52	26.0	

displacement situations are found in the region, and Africa still hosts 45% of the world's IDPs; however, compared with the region's total population, the ratio of IDPs has fallen. There were no new conflicts in Africa causing displacement in 2008, but several ongoing conflicts caused 2 million people in Africa to be newly displaced during the year.

In Somalia, the figure continued to increase, reaching 1.3 million by the end of the year. The DRC remains the world's fourth largest displacement situation with 1.4 million people displaced. The 400,000 people who returned home in some parts of the country were balanced out by the 400,000 who were newly displaced by armed conflict in the East. Sudan too saw both large numbers of newly displaced people and large numbers of returns. In Darfur, 315,000 people were newly displaced in the course of 2008, bringing the total for that region to 2.7 million IDPs. In Southern Sudan, an estimated 187,000 people were newly displaced, mostly as a result of inter-communal violence, while 350,000 IDPs were able to return to their homes. The total IDP population in Sudan stood at 4.9 million by the end of 2008.

Americas

In the Americas, there were 4.5 million IDPs at the end of the year – the highest figure since IDMC started to monitor internal displacement in the region 10 years ago. The rise was due to an acceleration in new displacement in Colombia, which pushed the world's second-largest displaced population to a record high. Despite increased efforts in national and international response to the displacement crisis, IDPs in Colombia continued to face widespread protection problems.

Middle East

The Middle East continued to experience an increase in population displacement. At the end of 2008, there were around 3.9 million IDPs in the region, the highest total in the past decade. Most of these people have been displaced for decades, and

there is little information on these long-term IDPs. Around 470,000 were newly displaced during 2008, principally by armed conflict in Iraq and Yemen. The largest return movements took place in Iraq, where 167,000 people were reported to have returned, and in Yemen where an estimated 70,000 people returned.

South and South-East Asia

South and South-East Asia were more affected by internal displacement in 2008 than in previous years. The internally displaced population in the region grew by 13% during 2008 to reach 3.5 million. New displacement was particularly significant in the Philippines, where 600,000 people fled an upsurge in fighting between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and in Pakistan where over 310,000 people were forced from their homes due to fighting between the government and armed groups. In Sri Lanka, an estimated 230,000 people were displaced as the conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) intensified. The majority of the 530,000 or so people who reportedly returned in South and South-East Asia did so after a relatively short period of displacement. In the Philippines 250,000 people returned within a few weeks or months of their displacement. In Sri Lanka an estimated 126,000 people displaced since 2006 managed to return to areas no longer affected by conflict. Only in Timor-Leste was return linked to peace-building and overall national progress in tackling the displacement situation.

Europe and Central Asia

The figure for Europe and Central Asia (including Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) changed little, and remained at around 2.5 million IDPs. New conflict broke out in Georgia in August, which caused the displacement of 128,000 people of whom around one in four were still displaced at the end of the year. Elsewhere, small numbers of IDPs managed to achieve durable solutions to end their situations of protracted displacement. However, in 2008 some 390,000 IDPs in the region were still living in temporary shelter and collective centres in desperate conditions, often without security of tenure many years after their displacement.

Profiling displaced populations

Information on the profile of IDP populations, including their location and their number disaggregated by age and sex, is still limited, despite an increased awareness of the importance of such information in planning and delivering responses. Only in six situations of internal displacement was there up-to-date information in 2008. For the rest, data was outdated, incomplete or non-existent.

Information was particularly scarce for the less visible groups of IDPs: in more than half of the displacement situations monitored in 2008, IDPs were dispersed, having in many cases found refuge with host communities either in rural or

urban areas. The relatively low visibility of these groups also meant that most received limited or no support from government agencies or local or international organizations. However, even in countries where IDPs were more visible (because they were concentrated in collective centres or IDP sites), essential data were still lacking. It was equally difficult to ascertain when and if IDPs ceased to be displaced, as there was little or no information on IDPs who had returned and even less on those who had integrated locally or resettled.

Several new standards were made available to humanitarian agencies and governments in 2008, including comprehensive guidance and a methodology to help profile urban IDPs. The challenge lies in ensuring that they are widely disseminated and used, so that better data are more consistently available in the future. Particular attention should be paid to less visible IDP populations. Profiling exercises should also include information on the rest of the population or host communities, in order to help identify the specific needs and concerns of both IDPs and non-IDPs.

Urban IDP populations

Internal displacement to towns and cities has received increasing attention over the years, but the data collected on most of these populations have remained limited and even anecdotal. Profiling urban IDP populations has indeed been particularly challenging, as conflict-induced displacement has coincided with massive and complex urbanization processes which make it difficult to distinguish between IDPs, other migrants and other urban residents. For example, more than 70% of IDPs in Côte d'Ivoire found refuge in Abidjan, the main economic centre, where the population has already increased by more than twenty times in the past 50 years.[5] IDPs typically disperse within urban areas, in some cases relying on 'invisibility' for security reasons, and in others being forced to move again within the city limits by local conflicts and actions of city authorities. IDPs in Khartoum, Sudan, were more likely than non-IDPs to have been evicted because of government relocation programmes. People's choice of housing can also contribute to their 'invisibility' – in cities in western Russia, IDPs from Chechnya were living in private rented accommodation, discouraging any effective profiling and monitoring of their needs as they sought to integrate.

IDP protection needs and risks

People caught in situations of internal displacement face various barriers to their enjoyment of rights, which may threaten their immediate safety or deny them equal access to entitlements. In many situations of internal displacement, IDPs have shared several protection risks with other groups, but the fact remains that internal

5   UN Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2008/9*, Earthscan, London/Sterling, 2008, p. 15.

displacement commonly exposes IDPs to additional discrimination and human rights violations directly resulting from their being uprooted.

Protection and assistance programmes should not target IDPs *per se*, but rather be based on their needs as identified in each specific situation. It is important to highlight displacement as an important 'indicator of potential vulnerability' for governments, national and international agencies assessing the situations of populations affected by armed conflict and situations of generalized violence, or developing human rights monitoring frameworks.

Physical security and integrity

The search for conditions where their physical safety and integrity may be protected is a major motivation for people to flee their homes. As restated in the Guiding Principles, IDPs have the right to be protected from violent attacks on their lives, dignity and physical, mental and moral integrity.[6] However, in 26 countries surveyed, IDPs have continued to be exposed to insecurity and violence in the places to which they have fled. IDPs in camps or settlements were specifically targeted in Darfur, the DRC, Kenya and Myanmar. IDPs in Chad – in particular, women going out to collect water or firewood – were victims of attacks and violence in areas surrounding camps and settlements. In Somalia and in Chad, armed groups were using the camps and settlements as cover and to hide weapons. Their use of the IDPs around them as a shield heightened the risks of the often disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks by government forces, with the IDPs being equally affected. The militarization of camps also implied a higher risk of displaced people, including children, being forcibly recruited into armed groups.

Basic necessities of life

Displacement dramatically disrupts livelihoods, and leads to a severe reduction in access to the basic necessities of life including food, clean water, shelter, adequate clothing, health services and sanitation. The right of IDPs to these necessities is strongly anchored in existing international human rights and humanitarian law, and should be protected both in emergency and non-emergency situations.[7]

Other social, economic and cultural rights

Beyond the provision of humanitarian assistance – which can generate a serious risk of dependency – the right of IDPs to an adequate standard of living (as restated in Guiding Principle 18) is best achieved by protecting their right to participate in economic opportunities (as referred to in Guiding Principle 22). IDPs are often deprived of the means to restore self-reliance, as they lack access to livelihoods and

6   *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, above note 2, Guiding Principles 10–11.
7   *Ibid*, Guiding Principles 7 (2) and 18.

work opportunities. This is particularly a problem for people trapped in situations of protracted displacement.

A distinctive consequence of displacement is the violation of IDPs' property rights,[8] protected both under international human rights and humanitarian law. In a majority of countries, IDPs were deprived of their land and houses as a result of destruction and looting.

Occupation of IDPs' land and houses, often by members of armed forces or groups and their families, was reported in 29 situations. In Côte d'Ivoire, members of the *Forces Nouvelles* (New Forces) were occupying IDPs' properties in the central and northern areas, while in Senegal, rebels from the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance were exploiting parts of the IDPs' land for timber, cashew and cannabis production. In Southern Sudan, the authorities failed to take action against the occupation of IDPs' land by Sudan People's Liberation Army soldiers. In Colombia, land left behind by IDPs was occupied by the paramilitary groups whose actions caused the displacement.

Displacement is often followed by the settlement of other groups in properties left behind. In Iraq, one of the principal barriers to return was the secondary occupation of houses, often by families that had been displaced themselves. The government in Bangladesh actively sponsored the settlement of Bengali families in villages formerly inhabited by indigenous tribal groups, while IDPs' land in Mexico was often given to other indigenous groups and to peasants allied with the local government forces. In Cyprus, IDPs' houses and businesses on both sides of the 'green line' have been reallocated to other IDPs who have been using these properties for almost 35 years; on the northern side, IDPs' property was also allocated to migrants from Turkey.

In most of these situations, IDPs have had little hope of recovering their lost property and rebuilding their lives in their home areas. Many areas affected by decades of war and violence, such as Southern Sudan, lack the legal framework to address disputes based on contested occupancy. In countries such as Uganda, where land issues are also governed by customary law, the right of widows and orphans to recover land left behind has often not been recognized.

Other civil and political rights

IDPs' movements and free choice of residence are often arbitrarily restricted. In India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, national and regional authorities confined IDPs into camps, to separate them from the host population for alleged security reasons.

Access to personal documentation that had been lost in flight or become inaccessible was a problem affecting IDPs in 20 countries in 2008. This hindered their enjoyment of the right to recognition before the law.[9] Enjoyment of other related rights was affected as well: IDPs without valid documentation were unable

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8   *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, above note 2, Guiding Principle 21.
9   *Ibid*, Guiding Principle 20.

to enrol their children in schools, access health care services and welfare and pensions entitlements and claim their property. The denial of IDPs' right to vote[10] in many instances reflected the continuing widespread failure to ensure their participation in decision-making processes.

Age, gender and diversity among internally displaced groups: specific needs

Internally displaced children

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, reflecting international law as enacted in the Convention on the Right of the Child and its additional protocols, underline that 'children and unaccompanied minors … shall be entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and to treatment which takes into account their special needs.'[11] All the Guiding Principles apply equally to displaced children, but some provisions specifically address the situation of children, expressly prohibiting their enslavement, use in forced labour[12] and participation or recruitment in armed hostilities.[13] The Principles also clarify displaced childrens' right to family life[14] (stating authorities' responsibility in expediting family reunification) and to education.[15] In practice, however, children displaced in many conflict situations continued in 2008 to suffer grave violations of these and other basic rights, as they were exposed to extremes of violence and deprivation.

For many armed groups, the recruitment and use of children has become the means of choice for waging war.[16] The social upheaval and poverty caused by hostilities make children vulnerable to recruitment, and internally displaced children – some of whom may have been separated from their families – are at high risk.[17] In 2008, internally displaced children were abducted and recruited from IDP camps or host families, sometimes on their way to or from school. Some followed armed groups or soldiers to find protection, while others were recruited by local self-defence militias. They were used as combatants, porters, domestic servants or sex slaves. Girls were involved in combat and non-combat roles in the majority of these countries, and many were raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence. The vast majority of child soldiers were in the ranks of non-state armed groups.

10 *Ibid*, Guiding Principle 22.
11 *Ibid*, Guiding Principle 4 (2).
12 *Ibid*, Guiding Principle 11 (b).
13 *Ibid*, Guiding Principle 13 (1).
14 *Ibid*, Guiding Principle 17 (3).
15 *Ibid*, Guiding Principle 23 (2).
16 UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict*, UN Doc. A/63/227, 6 August 2008, para. 43.
17 Coalition Against the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, pp. 22–24, available at http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/ (visited 9 September 2009).

During conflict and displacement, children and adolescents are often separated from their families or caretakers. These are the most vulnerable displaced children: they are more likely to be neglected and exposed to abuses including recruitment, trafficking and sexual exploitation. In several countries, many displaced children had sole responsibility for caring for their family, either because they were the heads of their household or because family members were too sick or too old to work. Cases of forced labour or economic exploitation of displaced children were frequent in at least 20 countries.

Internally displaced women

The Guiding Principles explicitly provide protection for displaced women against violence and exploitation,[18] and promote their equal access to assistance, services and education,[19] as well as their participation in decisions affecting them,[20] reflecting international law such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Provisions in favour of displaced women are guided by the need to safeguard them from gender-based violence, and to uphold their rights to equal access to services. In practice the rights of displaced women were violated in many countries surveyed by IDMC in 2008, with often devastating physical and psychological consequences for them and their families.

Rape and sexual exploitation of children and women have remained a frequent characteristic of conflict, and displaced women and children are at particular risk. In conflicts with an ethnic dimension, systematic rape has commonly been used to destabilize populations, and destroy community and family bonds. Displaced women have faced an increase in abuses such as domestic violence, and exploitation by people in positions of power, including those who control and distribute humanitarian assistance.[21]

Despite the lack of comprehensive statistics on sexual or gender-based attacks in countries undergoing internal displacement, reports in 2008 clearly indicated that sexual or gender-based violence against displaced women or children was a serious problem in at least 18 countries, 13 of them in Africa. Government troops were cited as the primary perpetrators of sexual abuses, followed by members of armed non-state groups, criminal groups and the general population (for example, relatives or neighbours), and in a few countries peacekeeping troops. Abuses were generally perpetrated with total impunity. In addition, many displaced women were unable to access essential reproductive health services, due to prohibitive fees, lack of health care infrastructure and insecurity.

In some 30 countries, many displaced women were reported to have taken sole responsibility for their families. In countries like Chad and Somalia,

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18 *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, above note 2, Guiding Principle 11 (2).
19 *Ibid*, Guiding Principles 18 (2), 19, 20 (3) and 23 (3).
20 *Ibid*, Guiding Principles 7 (3)(d) and 18 (3).
21 Gender-Based Violence Global Technical Support Project, *Gender-Based Violence in Populations Affected by Armed Conflict*, Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium, Arlington, 2004.

female-headed households made up the majority of internally displaced families – thus women were the main breadwinners in situations offering few livelihood opportunities.

Displaced women faced particular obstacles to obtaining documentation in 14 countries. In at least half of them, this meant that displaced women could not receive assistance due to them as IDPs, take possession of or receive compensation for their land or property, or travel freely in their country. In as many as half of the countries affected by conflict-induced displacement, displaced women (widows in particular) faced obstacles to owning or inheriting property or land. They and their dependents were thus deprived of adequate housing and land, and denied the chance to return to their former homes.

Elderly displaced people

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement state that 'elderly persons … shall be entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and to treatment which takes into account their special needs'.[22] Older people can have more difficulty accessing services, and are less able to flee quickly or to protect themselves from harm during conflict. Among them, older widows are often the most vulnerable.[23] In some countries in 2008, elderly IDPs were unable to return to their home areas once the security situation improved. In Uganda, elderly IDPs were prevented from returning home by the lack of support to build new huts there or because health centres were too far away.

In the few countries affected by internal displacement in which older people received a state pension, IDPs often lacked the documentation needed to claim their entitlements. For example in the Russian Federation, older IDPs struggled to get their full pensions as archives had been destroyed and they had no way of replacing documents lost during the conflict. As a result, they received a minimum pension and had to continue to work or rely on the care of relatives who often had limited means themselves following their displacement. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, different entitlements to pensions within the country led to reduced pension entitlements for IDPs, while in Croatia the non-recognition of years worked in areas not under state control had the same impact.

Internally displaced minorities

Indigenous peoples, minorities, pastoralists and groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands make up a disproportionate share of internally displaced populations across the world. A number of international norms recognize the vulnerabilities these groups face in the context of displacement. The

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22 *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, above note 2, Guiding Principle 4 (2).
23 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Humanitarian Action and Older Persons. An essential brief for humanitarian actors*, October 2008, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/490b0c102.html (visited 11 August 2009).

Guiding Principles emphasize the obligation of States to protect indigenous peoples and minorities from displacement.[24] Acknowledging their dependence on their land for survival and the continuation of their way of life, Article 10 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that they 'shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories'. The International Labour Organisation Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention obliges ratifying states to respect their dependence on and relationship with their collective lands, in particular by prohibiting their relocation other than in exceptional circumstances, and recognizing their right to return to their lands once the reasons for relocation have ceased.[25]

Nevertheless, minorities were internally displaced in at least 36 countries surveyed by IDMC: as a mechanism to eliminate them or their claims for recognition or autonomy, to access natural resources in their collective territories, or because they were caught up in external conflicts. Minorities make up virtually the entire population displaced in Sri Lanka (Tamil and Muslim groups) since 2006, and also in eastern Myanmar (including Karenni, Karen, Shan and Mon people). They also make up more than half of the displaced population in the Philippines (Moro peoples) and Croatia (Croatian Serbs). In Colombia, a disproportionate number of indigenous tribal groups and Afro-Colombians have been displaced. In almost all countries surveyed, loss of ancestral land was the most serious threat faced by ethnic minorities as a result of displacement. Other threats, such as assassination or forced disappearance, forced assimilation, and destruction of their identity were also frequent. After being displaced, in most countries, loss of livelihoods was reported as the most important protection challenge, followed by discriminatory access to assistance and services. For example, the traditionally nomadic Peuhl in the Central African Republic were displaced after losing their cattle to road bandits. As a result, they were forced to give up their traditional way of life, and had to settle among subsistence farmers or flee to neighbouring countries.

Language problems and a lack of government officials trained to deal with their special needs further complicate the situation of displaced minorities, especially when they have been displaced beyond their own region.

Achieving durable solutions

IDPs may find solutions to their displacement in three ways: through returning to their place of origin, integrating in the place to which they have been displaced, or settling in a third location. These options can be considered durable once IDPs enjoy their rights in a non-discriminatory manner and have no more protection or assistance needs related to their displacement.

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24 *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, above note 2, Guiding Principle 9.
25 Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, adopted 27 June 1989, entered into force 5 September 1991, Art 16.

There is little reliable or precise information on the number of IDPs who have found durable solutions, because it is the culmination of a gradual process and must be assessed on the basis of multiple criteria. Political considerations can also complicate the picture, as governments wishing to declare that situations have been resolved may claim that IDPs have found durable solutions, or put pressure on them to choose one settlement solution over others. It is therefore essential to assess whether there are outstanding protection and assistance needs related to displacement before concluding that a durable solution has been found.

What are durable solutions to internal displacement?

According to the Framework for Durable Solutions,[26] the extent to which a durable solution has been achieved depends on both the process that led to the solution and the fulfilment of certain conditions. The process includes the provision of relevant information so that IDPs can freely choose their preferred solution, and their consultation and involvement in the process of designing programmes and policies. Conditions for durable solutions include a safe environment, access to documentation, restitution of property or compensation for property lost or destroyed, and access to basic necessities of life, services and livelihood opportunities.

The fulfilment of both process and conditions criteria can take years of progressive improvement from the end of a conflict. Information from the IDMC database illustrates the difficulty in assessing durable solutions: in 18 countries out of 46 surveyed it was impossible to determine whether durable solutions had been found due to the lack of information and monitoring of the situation.[27]

The process of seeking durable solutions should not be confused with their achievement. Return, for instance, is not in itself a durable solution. Therefore, returnee figures do not necessarily reflect the achievement of a durable solution, as some returnees may still have specific protection and assistance needs that should be monitored. Security risks, for example, can be higher after return than during displacement, and returnees facing unsustainable conditions can be displaced again, as has happened in Afghanistan and in the Central African Republic in recent years. To mitigate these risks, returnees in countries such as Turkey, Uganda or Kosovo have decided to commute between their places of displacement and villages of origin to cultivate their fields there, and to assess conditions before leaving the life they have built while displaced. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, many returnees did not register their return so they could continue to receive the healthcare that they were entitled to as IDPs in their place of displacement, but which they feared losing due to discrimination or bureaucratic hurdles in return areas. The lack of income or access to education also led some families to split, with

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26 Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *When Displacement Ends: A Framework for Durable Solutions*, June 2007, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/469f6bed2.html (visited 9 September 2009).
27 IDMC, above note 1, p. 25.

adults returning and children staying in areas of displacement, or travelling back daily to continue their education. In Indonesia, IDPs returning to their former homes in Central Aceh left their families behind until their coffee plantations had been partly restored.

While IDPs who return or settle elsewhere may be identifiable, the transition from long-term displacement to sustainable local integration is harder to track. This is particularly the case where temporary IDP settlements gradually become permanent, or where displaced groups progressively merge into the local population. Forced displacement often mirrors other migrations from rural to urban areas, with IDPs and migrants joining the existing residents of slum neighbourhoods. In cities across the world, the challenge remains to distinguish the needs of those forcibly displaced in order to facilitate durable solutions to their displacement.

Measures designed to ensure IDPs' full enjoyment of their rights – in particular an adequate standard of living (shelter, livelihood opportunities) – will facilitate local integration either on a temporary basis until return is possible, or on a permanent basis if IDPs do not wish to return. Local integration can therefore be a durable solution in itself, or a way to live a decent life until other durable solutions become feasible.

The role of governments in supporting durable solutions

Governments are responsible for securing durable solutions for IDPs on their territory. Most provide support to durable solutions through legislation, policies and programmes. In the majority of cases, national policies developed to address internal displacement do indeed focus on durable solutions, and particularly on return: governments in 32 countries actively supported return, compared with only ten that supported resettlement and eight that supported local integration.

According to IDMC's survey, return and local integration have taken place in more situations than resettlement in a third location. Despite the support mentioned above, all three durable solutions were overwhelmingly achieved by IDPs acting independently, with little or no direct involvement of national authorities or the international community. Nevertheless, the survey did suggest possible links between the effectiveness of attempts to achieve durable solutions and the national or international support available. Support was lent primarily to return, less frequently to resettlement and yet more rarely to local integration; return was also the most frequently successful and durable option, followed again by resettlement and local integration. However, these figures may in fact reflect the prevalence of successful returns after short-term displacement.

Return of IDPs has sometimes been achieved through pressure or coercion before conditions allow for it to be sustainable. IDPs have been forced to return in nine countries, while pressure in favour of return (for example, provision of assistance only to IDPs who intend to return) has become more frequent. In half of the countries monitored, return was the only durable solution actively supported by authorities; thus, IDPs were rarely in a position to make a free choice.

Governments may favour return for a number of reasons. Return is a way to remedy forced displacement and some of the human rights violations resulting from displacement. It may be hoped that return to areas of origin will enable IDPs to access their lands and previous sources of livelihood. Governments may also prefer to help people to return to their own land and homes, rather than try to accommodate them permanently in places they do not own. The political focus on return underlines the necessity of monitoring return situations to ensure that conditions exist for return to be sustainable, and that national authorities have not used return to give the impression that an internal displacement situation has been addressed.

Support to local integration involves the provision of permanent and adequate housing through the development of social housing programmes or the upgrading of temporary accommodation while ensuring security of tenure for re-sidents. Because so few governments have supported local integration or settlement elsewhere, IDPs have tended to remain without support in inadequate living con-ditions, often for many years, when conditions have not allowed for return. This has particularly been the case in countries where supporting local integration has been perceived as endorsing ethnic cleansing. For this reason, authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still reluctant to openly facilitate local integration more than 13 years after the end of conflict there. In contrast, Georgia and Afghanistan changed their policies in 2008 to facilitate the local integration of IDPs.

In order to address the reluctance to support durable solutions other than return, the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs has argued that local integration and settlement elsewhere are not incom-patible with return, underlining that IDPs who enjoy decent living conditions and access to livelihood opportunities will be in a better position to rebuild their lives in places of return when it becomes possible.[28]

The obstacles to durable solutions highlighted above indicate the areas where national and international efforts should focus to create conditions for durable solutions. Once security conditions are established and consolidated through reconciliation activities to address possible discrimination, programmes should facilitate access to livelihoods and to the housing, land and property that so often support those livelihoods. Social housing schemes should also be set up for those who cannot return or reclaim their properties. Ensuring non-discriminatory access to services such as healthcare, education and pensions is also necessary in order to ensure durable solutions.

Programmes to support durable solutions should promote income-generating activities, and address land and property disputes arising when properties left behind by IDPs are occupied by others or destroyed. Addressing these issues requires immediate and long-term action: first to register abandoned

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28 Walter Kälin, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, *Statement to the Human Rights Council*, 12 March 2009, available at http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2009/0312_internal_displacement_kalin.aspx (visited 14 September 2009).

land and property, and then to rebuild properties and implement restitution and compensation mechanisms.

In countries where ownership is mostly customary and the government elects to address the issue through global land reform (combining recognition of customary ownership and measures for the landless), it is essential to ensure that measures do not discriminate against IDPs, for example by making continuous and peaceful occupation a pre-condition for formalizing customary ownership.

The role of the international community is to support national governments' efforts towards durable solutions. The considerable financial support offered during emergencies tends to diminish rapidly, and this lack of sustained support is generally reflected in the absence of programmes monitoring the achievement of durable solutions and the scarcity of information on the issue. Effective peace-building processes must go hand-in-hand with sustained reconstruction, as well as economic regeneration efforts to ensure durable solutions.

Conclusion: a specific response for IDPs?

Displacement remains a critical factor of vulnerability for people across the world. While the wider non-displaced population (particularly in areas of displacement) may be exposed to the same abuses and barriers, the fact of having been displaced tends to further reduce IDPs' access to physical security, the basic necessities of life, and enjoyment of other rights. They are liable to have lost property, livelihoods and documentation in their flight, as well as the support of family members and community networks, and to have suffered severe trauma in the process.

It is crucial to consider and address the protection and assistance needs of host populations in areas of displacement, resettlement and return. As local communities are frequently called to provide protection and assistance to IDPs, they also merit adequate support to accommodate displaced people in conditions of safety and dignity. Therefore, efforts should be strengthened to assess the impact of displacement on all the populations affected by a displacement situation, and to identify the specific needs of each.