



SUMMARY

5th GP20 Steering Group Meeting
Ensuring inclusion, participation and leadership of
internally displaced persons
Wednesday 4 December 2019, 15:00-17:30
UN Palais des Nations, Geneva

Participants

Meeting participants were as follows: Afghanistan, Austria, Colombia, Fiji, Georgia, Germany, Nigeria, Norway, South Sudan, Switzerland, United States of America, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, UNHCR, OCHA, IOM, UNDP, OHCHR, Global Protection Cluster, World Bank, Danish Refugee Council, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Joint IDP Profiling Service, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, World Vision, Interaction, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross.

Key messages

Drawing on experiences from South Sudan, Colombia, Honduras, Democratic Republic of Congo and Myanmar, the following key messages emerged from the discussion on the concept and practice of inclusion, participation and leadership of internally displaced persons (IDPs):

1. **Participation has three core elements:** It is simultaneously a human right, a means to implement human rights, and a state duty. IDPs of all ages, genders, identities and abilities should be encouraged to participate as they each have unique perspectives and experiences of displacement. The lack of consultation and participation of IDPs jeopardizes the success of relief and recovery efforts.
2. **Effective participation has four sets of conditions:** It is free, informed and safe; culturally, age and locally appropriate; meaningful with adequate time and methods; and inclusive. It also requires trust, which is built by securing the peace, re-establishing justice, speaking IDPs' language and meeting their basic needs. Civil society organizations and community leaders are key actors in building trust with IDPs.
3. **Participation of IDPs takes different forms:** IDPs may participate through consultations for the development of an IDP law, protection monitoring discussions, capacity building followed by training of other IDPs, representation on IDP settlement site committees, and by advising on the feasibility of return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.
4. **Participation of IDPs can raise expectations:** IDP participation often means IDPs informing others about their situation, needs, capacities and wishes. Sharing this information can raise IDPs' expectations that their problems will be solved. These expectations can be managed and met through government leadership and partnerships where the government requires additional support.
5. **Formally identifying IDPs can pose security risks to them:** Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized IDPs means identifying them, which can pose a challenge if IDPs fear reprisal. To identify, access and not lose sight of these persons, local community focal points, whether individuals, civil society or faith-based organizations are important intermediaries since they often already have the trust of these IDPs.
6. **Agreed upon data on internal displacement is essential for ensuring IDP participation:** Harmonized data is required to understand who and where IDPs are, to ensure their inclusion can be consulted, including the most vulnerable, and meet their needs. It is also required to make good decisions and produce effective change.

Introduction

This fifth meeting of the GP20 Steering Group focused on the inclusion, participation and leadership of IDPs, one of the four GP20 priorities in the [GP20 Plan of Action](#). The aim of this meeting was to learn from the experiences of governments, NGOs and IDPs which have taken important steps to

ensure the engagement of IDPs, including progress and challenges. The meeting was also an opportunity to identify possibilities for governments, UN agencies and NGOs to work together on engaging IDPs as well as to discuss linkages to the three other GP20 priorities: data and analysis on internal displacement, laws and policies on internal displacement, and addressing protracted displacement while fostering durable solutions.

Framing IDP Participation

Ensuring the meaningful participation of IDPs is a priority objective of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs. Recalling her [report on IDP participation](#), the Special Rapporteur explained that participation is simultaneously a human right, a means to implement human rights, and a state duty. At its essence, it is about influencing decision-making and achieving change. IDPs should have opportunities to influence and make decisions concerning their lives. They should not be disenfranchised because of their displacement. Particular groups such as children, minorities and women have the right for their unique perspectives to be heard.

States have the duty to consult IDPs from the outset in the design and planning of the response to internal displacement as outlined in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the African Union Convention on Protection and Assistance to IDPs. This can be achieved, for example, through representation, group consultations or public policy development. States have a responsibility to also establish the conditions for IDPs to organize themselves and facilitate their access to political participation. This may require legislative amendments, facilitated voter registration and additional efforts to inform IDPs on voting procedures in their area of displacement, for example.

Effective participation has four elements. It must be voluntary, appropriate, meaningful and inclusive. If these conditions are met, the participation of IDPs not only empowers themselves, but can help address their protection concerns since others are informed about their particular difficulties. The lack of effective participation jeopardizes the success of recovery efforts which can lead to deeper and more persistent levels of poverty, resentment and injustice. IDPs should be enabled to contribute to their own recovery and be encouraged to share their views. This includes internally displaced children who have taken a leadership role in child-led consultations and representation of their peers.

Country experiences to ensuring inclusion, participation and leadership of IDPs

1. South Sudan, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission

The government of South Sudan has realized the importance of ensuring the continuous inclusion and engagement of communities affected by internal displacement, which now number 1.46 million persons. IDPs have been engaged, including as follows:

I. IDP Site Committees

IDPs live in UNMIS base sites and self-settled arrangements in host communities, including in urban settings. All IDP sites are organized with committees involving IDP members to manage their affairs. Committee leaders work with the government and the international community.

II. Development of IDP bill

The government received support from UNHCR and was guided by Professor Chaloka Beyani to consult with IDPs as part of the process to develop South Sudan's draft IDP bill. Information was collected on what IDPs require and this was included in the IDP bill, which is currently under review at the Ministry of Justice.

III. Return of IDPs to their place of origin

The government states that IDPs are the best placed to advise on whether the situation is conducive to voluntary, safe and dignified return. When IDPs are unsure about whether it is safe to go home, the government is not insisting or encouraging them to return. Some IDPs are nevertheless returning

spontaneously and the government is trying to meet their expectations in line with the recently adopted Framework on Return, Reintegration and Relocation.

Ultimately, meaningful participation of IDPs requires contact with a community leader, meeting the basic needs of IDPs and trust-building. Trust is built as IDPs' protection and assistance needs are met, as the peace agreement is implemented and as the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission continues. Peace Process Committees are required to have 35 percent representation of women. People engage as the government builds relationships with them, and this begins by identifying focal points in the community and evolves by interacting with them proactively and constructively with a human approach.

Engaging with IDPs can raise their expectations of assistance and support. IDPs share information and challenges with government officials, which then become issues for the government to solve. The government must do all it can to meet those expectations. The most important expectation of IDPs is durable peace, which requires cooperation of IDPs, affected communities and government at all levels. The government cannot accomplish this on its own. Partners are required to assist, including with provision of basic services and additional support for harmonized data on internal displacement collected using a standardized approach and analyzed in a scientific manner.

2. Honduras, World Vision

World Vision reported that Honduras has been considered one of the most fragile countries in the world from a political, social, environmental, security and economic perspective. One of the poorest countries in the region, insecurity related to gangs and violence is the main driver of displacement. An estimated 247,000 people are internally displaced in the country, though this is likely an underestimate since many displaced prefer to remain hidden or anonymous because of insecurity and not report threats or violence to the authorities for fear of further violence. Also, many people who have fled do not recognize themselves as displaced, but as having moved to keep their family safe.

Together with the government and UNHCR, World Vision conducted a survey among communities affected by violence to better understand displacement dynamics in the country. Communities facing the worst violence were prioritized and women, youth and children all pointed to gangs and related threats and violence as the main cause of their displacement. Social cohesion is weak and the displaced face stigma in their new area as newcomers. They were hesitant to talk openly, hence it was necessary to take the following precautions to identify, access and discuss with them:

- I. Use the church and organized groups for youth, people with disabilities and LGBTI as conduits to access displaced people since the displaced have already placed trust in them
- II. Ensure conversations are private and confidential since if the displaced are heard saying the community is unsafe, their life could be at risk
- III. Use the relationships developed through World Vision's long-term presence in communities to gain the trust of marginalized groups who do not have representatives, and share these views in government committees

All groups of IDPs based on age, gender and diversity should be surveyed as they have different perspectives on their displacement and environment, which need to be understood to respond appropriately and adequately address the conditions that are causing displacement. Children and young women are coerced by gangs to become their informers or girlfriends, and parents flee with their children because of threats from gangs or the risk that their children might join gangs. The situation is complex as other adults feel increased standing in their community when one of their teenagers are in a gang.

There is a misperception that the displaced are affiliated with gangs and IDPs therefore face stigma and unemployment in their areas of displacement. The reality is the opposite, they fled since they

refused to engage with gangs. Discussions with the private sector on this showing that IDPs have the same rights as other Hondurans has helped to combat stigma against the displaced. The government has facilitated the participation of IDP by establishing an Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence, supporting the profiling exercise on displacement dynamics and drafting an IDP law. More work is needed to know where the displaced are and to prevent the conditions that cause youth to join gangs.

3. Myanmar, UNHCR

In Kachin State in northern Myanmar, an estimated 100,000 IDPs have been displaced since 2011 due to armed conflict. Around 2000 IDPs have mental or physical disabilities. Persons with disabilities are often among the most vulnerable in humanitarian emergencies because they are at greater risk of abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence, or neglect due to social and cultural stigmas. These stigmas, combined with increased vulnerabilities in camp settings, create barriers to participation in camp life.

Since 2017, around 75 IDPs with disabilities were trained in a 12-day master class on photo story telling taught by international and national professional photographers as part of a UNHCR project. The project aims to empower IDPs with disabilities by giving them the skills, confidence and opportunity to tell their own stories and advocate for their own needs. For many, this was the first time that they were given the opportunity to attend a training. Each IDP produced a video that told their personal story, showing the challenges and obstacles they face, but also their significant resilience.

Over 50 photo stories were created by these IDPs and one is the story of Bawk Ra, a young woman who lost the ability to walk when she was five years old and has been living in displacement since 2011. Bawk Ra was selected to compete in the Yangon Photo Festival, the largest photography festival in South East Asia and won the third prize in the “emerging photographers” category. She also recently assisted photo-training workshops for other displaced persons living with a disability in IDP camps in Kachin.

Acknowledging that the views and needs of persons with disabilities are not properly taken into consideration in the humanitarian response, the UN Humanitarian Country Team in Myanmar has since 2017 made disability inclusion a key objective. The protection sector has also been advocating for a redoubling of efforts on inclusion of people with disabilities. There is a need to better understand their capacities and resilience, and assess barriers they face. The Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan will be based on consultations with communities and there will be new indicators showing whether IDP feel their views have been taken into consideration.

In Myanmar, trust is being built with affected communities in multiple ways. Trust and social cohesion are being built by creating networks among IDP communities and linking them to local youth, women, elderly and religious groups, and supporting regular interactions between them. Inclusion focal points are being trained in IDP camps in Kachin state as a pilot exercise to improve inclusion and participation of all IDPs. Protection monitoring teams also build trust through regular interviews and discussions with IDPs. A Communication with Communities Working Group was established two years ago and published materials in different languages that IDPs speak to facilitate their participation.