



Principles 5 to 9 of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* address protection from displacement. These principles affirm that:

Authorities and international actors must respect their obligations under international law so as to avoid conditions that might lead to displacement;

All human beings have the right to be protected from arbitrary displacement, whether from attempts to alter the composition of an area's population, from armed conflict (with limited exceptions), from development projects, in cases of disasters, or as a result of collective punishment;

When displacement is compelled by authorities, it shall last no longer than necessary;

Prior to displacement compelled by authorities, those authorities shall consider alternatives to displacement;

If displacement is undertaken by authorities, it shall occur under proper conditions; shall avoid family separation; shall be accomplished with proper legal guarantees, review, and remedies; shall be accompanied by adequate information to the displaced, seeking their consent; and, shall involve the displaced in the move;

Authorities have particular obligations to protect against displacement of those with a close attachment to the land, such as indigenous peoples and pastoralists.

These provisions of the *Guiding Principles* are intended to ensure that displacement will be avoided, if possible, and, if it does occur, that displacement “shall not be carried out in a manner that violates the rights to life, dignity, liberty and security of those affected.”

To promote the principles relating to protection from displacement, the following activities may be undertaken in coordination with agencies with designated responsibility in the field:

- Disseminating the *Guiding Principles* and information about the *Guiding Principles*, especially in languages used by the internally displaced and relevant authorities; advocating widely for the application of the *Guiding Principles*;
- Supporting training programs on the *Guiding Principles*, and on international humanitarian and human rights law for staff, for the displaced themselves, and for relevant authorities and partner organizations;
- Collecting accurate data on the populations and conditions in communities at risk of displacement and establishing “early warning” systems that alert communities, authorities, and organizations to the risk of displacement;
- Collecting and disseminating accurate information on the factors impelling displacement; suggesting alternatives to

displacement, through studies, analyses, and discussions with community leaders and authorities;

- Identifying groups with special needs among populations at risk or communities with a special dependency on or attachment to their lands and targeting assistance or protection to those groups;
- Advocating among the displaced, and with authorities, donors, international organizations, and others for the rights of communities at risk of displacement; opening channels of communication between displaced communities and national or local authorities who may be able to prevent displacement or ensure that it is accomplished with respect for the rights of the displaced;
- Establishing a presence in communities threatened with displacement to reduce the risk of displacement;
- Prepositioning staff, transport, shelter materials, and other supplies that may be necessary if displacement appears inevitable;
- Ascertaining with displaced community leaders and relevant authorities optimal locations where communities can settle during the period of displacement, taking into account their need for protection and basic services during the period of displacement and preparing those sites; conducting studies on the potential environmental impact of displacement, when necessary, and seeking ways to minimize damage.

Field-based examples of such practice include:

11. SUPPORT FOR AN INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT "EARLY WARNING SYSTEM" TO ALERT COMMUNITIES TO DISPLACEMENT THREATS AND TO ASSIST WITH CONTINGENCY PLANNING: [COLOMBIA]

A Colombian research institute has developed an early warning analytical tool to measure situations with a high risk of displacement, with support from UNICEF, the European Community Humanitarian Office [ECHO] and other international organizations. Using community-level "sentinel sites," the Consultoria para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento [CODHES] (the Human Rights and Displacement Consultancy) assesses indicators that suggest increased

likelihood of displacement within a given geographic area. Data are shared with leaders of at-risk communities, with government officials, and with organizations working with displaced communities, to generate prevention measures or to spur contingency planning activities.

This data gathering system also was used to target emergency relief in reception areas immediately after displaced families arrived. The CODHES early warning system also proved useful in establishing baselines to measure program interventions intended to benefit the internally displaced.

12. INFORMATION GATHERING AND REPORTING TO MINIMIZE FURTHER DISPLACEMENT: [BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA]

During the 1992-95 conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, agencies with an operational field presence played an important role in the gathering of information on the methods, process, and impact of arbitrary displacement and on the condition of internally displaced persons. As the lead UN agency in Bosnia-Herzegovina, UNHCR interpreted its role to include the responsibility to share such information with the international community whenever appropriate.

Through this process, international actors were better sensitized to the situation of displaced persons inside Bosnia and were provided with a more informed basis for their interventions. In some cases, information gathered from the field may ultimately have helped to minimize or slow down the process of arbitrary displacement.

13. INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO BUILD LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO MITIGATE DISPLACEMENT RESULTING FROM NATURAL DISASTERS: [TAJIKISTAN]

The prevalence of natural hazards, such as landslides and floods, contributes significantly to internal displacement in mountainous

Tajikistan. Recognizing this threat, the IOM designed a training program to prevent or mitigate the effects of these natural threats. As part of its capacity building effort, IOM assisted government and local officials to develop a model for adaptive resettlement of villages in high risk areas and trained these officials in planning for and implementing resettlement activities.

14. ANALYSIS OF AND RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT “REGROUPMENT” POLICIES WHEN THE VOLUN- TARY NATURE OF THESE POLICIES IS QUESTION- ABLE: [BURUNDI]

In 1996, the government of Burundi began implementing a policy of mandatory “regroupment,” under which populations in areas with sustained rebel activity were required to leave their homes and relocate to camps guarded by the armed forces. By 1997, those internally displaced by this policy accounted for nearly one-half of Burundi’s total displaced population. The government claimed that it could only guarantee the safety of the people if they assembled voluntarily in designated “regroupment” centers. However, as the policy was based on the assumption that those who did not regroup would be considered as supporters of the rebels, the process could not be regarded as entirely voluntary.

Humanitarian agencies were reluctant to provide humanitarian assistance to regroupment camps as this could be seen as giving support to a policy that involved forced relocation. After consultations among UN agencies, NGOs and donors, both at field and headquarters levels, a common position was adopted by international organizations in March 1997. The humanitarian community agreed that no assistance would be provided for the creation or administration of regroupment centers. Rather, aid would be confined to the provision of life-sustaining supplies, namely food, medicine, water and sanitation. Further, the conditions under which assistance would be provided included the confirmed full and free access of human rights

observers to regroupment centers to monitor any abuses that might occur and a fresh assessment of needs and circumstances for any replenishment of humanitarian supplies to the centers.

In June 1997, regroupment camps began closing. In early September, the government of Burundi convened a meeting attended by UN, donor and NGO representatives to discuss timetables for the dismantling of the camps in various provinces. The humanitarian community encouraged this process by providing return packages consisting of a ninety-day food ration, seeds, tools and nonfood items. By the end of 1997, a total of 250 thousand people had returned to their homes.

15. ADVOCACY AGAINST DISPLACEMENT, INCLUDING PRESENCE AND ONGOING CONTACTS WITH MULTIPLE FACTIONS: [COLOMBIA]

Multisided conflict in Colombia, frequently targeting civilians, has resulted in the internal displacement of one in every forty residents. Through a number of field offices across Colombia, the ICRC provided assistance to thousands of internally displaced persons after displacement. A second ICRC objective is enabling people to stay in their homes and communities through advocacy with groups causing displacement. In part, this implies an effort to instruct parties in the essentials of international humanitarian law, especially the duty to safeguard persons not taking part in hostilities.

As a practical matter, advocacy to prevent displacement requires widespread and ongoing contacts between ICRC representatives and contending parties in Colombia, in which a field presence facilitates discussions. The ICRC reports the following among regular contacts in Colombia: civilian authorities; local and international NGOs; the high command of the Colombian military, every military brigade or division of the armed forces; battalions of the antiguerrilla units; the major self-defense and private security groups; most of the one

hundred or so “fronts” of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia [FARC] and the National Liberation Army [ELN]; the directors of 150 prisons; numerous “cabildos” or native population municipalities; all autonomous branches of the Colombian Red Cross; and the different strata of the Catholic Church. In urban areas, these contacts extend to numerous militias and youth gangs.

16. ORGANIZATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE IN THREATENED COMMUNITIES TO PREVENT DISPLACEMENT OR REPEAT DISPLACEMENT: [COLOMBIA]

In the Colombian “violence,” individuals or entire communities often receive direct threats that they will be killed or removed from their land. Those receiving warnings face life-or-death decisions about whether to comply with the threats and join the legions of displaced or remain to risk beatings, torture, or murder. Often these decisions must be made with little succor from civil authorities, who lack the capability or will to provide protection.

Colombian and international organizations, primarily NGOs, partially filled this protection gap by providing volunteers to reside with threatened individuals or within at-risk communities. The “presence” or “accompaniment” by these volunteers can deter attacks by combatants, who may fear outside witnesses. Although volunteers, especially those sponsored by international organizations, occasionally are criticized for lacking in-depth knowledge of local culture or political situations, “presence” is widely used as a protection tool in the Colombian conflict and is widely acclaimed as successful.

17. INTERNATIONAL AGENCY CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND STOCKPILING TO MITIGATE DISPLACEMENT CRISES: [BURUNDI]

Continued instability in Burundi, related to ethnic struggle between Hutu and Tutsi communities, has led to the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands. In 1995, heightened tensions led aid agen-

cies to conclude that further displacement—either the creation of new internally displaced persons or additional movement by those already displaced—was imminent. While international agencies continued efforts to defuse the tensions threatening further displacement, practical reality also suggested the need for serious, coordinated contingency planning.

Aid agencies not only husbanded relief food and other program supplies, but also the logistics resources necessary to manage programs during the chaos of widespread displacement. Among items stockpiled against future contingencies were vehicles, satellite communications equipment, and additional emergency response personnel.

18. RAPID RESPONSE BY INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES TO AMELIORATE INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT: [SRI LANKA]

Following a major military offensive in Sri Lanka, displaced families began to flee westward to the “open relief center” at Madhu. Fearing overcrowding at Madhu, UNHCR staff responded rapidly, meeting groups of IDPs en route and assessing and attending to their humanitarian needs. After determining that the displaced were secure in the locations to which they had moved, UNHCR provided shelter and other program services in situ. This response avoided overcrowding and potential health problems at Madhu, allowed internally displaced persons to settle where more land was available, and provided international support to displaced communities closer to their homes to facilitate visits and potential return.

19. FOCUS ON DISPLACED COMMUNITIES WITH A “SPECIAL DEPENDENCY ON AND ATTACHMENT TO THEIR LANDS:” [COLOMBIA]

The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (principle 9) notes that “[s]tates are under a particular obligation to protect against the displacement of indigenous peoples . . . and other groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands.” Yet, in Colom-

bia, many indigenous families are among the displaced, usually as a result of entire communities fleeing violence in ancestral homelands. Even before joining the ranks of the internally displaced, Colombia's indigenous communities—composing about 5 percent of the rural population—were at risk, with per capita income at about 60 percent of the national average, with triple the national infant mortality rate, and with 60 percent illiteracy.

In response to this need, and recognizing that displaced indigenous communities would encounter special difficulties integrating within urban or semi-urban areas outside their ancestral homelands, the WFP targeted its assistance to internally displaced persons from indigenous communities. This assistance began with the provision of emergency rations—made up of traditional, culturally appropriate foodstuffs—at displacement sites and, in some cases, while returnee communities were reestablishing themselves. In late 1998, WFP was planning to expand its assistance to displaced indigenous communities. The agency was adapting its national plan for poverty alleviation for indigenous communities (consisting of rural infrastructure construction, rehabilitation of degraded micro-watersheds, and support for income-earning activities, including credit access and technical assistance) to displaced communities.

WFP's combination of emergency support and longer-term community development attempts to strengthen the capacity of indigenous communities to maintain their unique connection to the land, even when these communities confront widespread internal displacement.