



ODUMUNC 39

Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee

Addressing the Needs of Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

By: Sean McGuffin



ODUMUNC 2016

Issue Brief for the General Assembly Third Committee:
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Old Dominion University Model United Nations Society

Introduction

There are more displaced peoples now than at any point in history. As of 2014 there are just under 60 million who've been driven from their homes, roughly comparable to the population of Italy, and given current events this figure is unlikely to go down. The figure though includes a wide range of peoples all of whom has to flee for numerous reasons. As the UN it is your duty to, as the most successful humanitarian aid organization in history, alleviate some of the hardship currently being experienced by these peoples all over the world.

The term Displaced Peoples is intentionally vague and includes several categories of individuals whom need to be properly defined. To clarify:

- Refugee- As determined by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is someone who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country."

- Asylum Seeker- Is a person who identifies as a refugee, but who has not yet been formally processed as such by the host country. In laymen's terms, there are people

who want to receive refugee status, but have yet to be accepted or formally processed.¹



- Stateless Person- This is a person who, according to the 1954 Convention on Status of Stateless Persons, is someone who is not considered a national, kind of like a citizen, of any state under the exercise of each states laws. Some people may become stateless while others are so at birth. This can happen when a state does not want to take responsibility any longer for a particular minority, or due to natural disaster or crisis a group of people is forced from their homes and it is uncertain from whence they came.

- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) - Internally displaced persons are people who have fled their homes out of necessity, like a refugee, but the key difference being that they have not crossed an international border. Meaning they remain under the jurisdiction, or everyone's

¹ UNHCR. "Asylum-Seekers." UNHCR.
<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html>



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favorite word sovereignty, of their home country (even if their country is the persecutor) and retain the same rights in that country and under international law.²

If this is one of the topics set by body it may take many different actions, but must make sure it is addressing the particular circumstances of Internally Displaced Peoples. The bodies actions may be in relation to these other groups, and may use the similar strategies if it likes, but IDPs must be the primary concern of any action.

UN High Commission on Refugees

The UN General Assembly created the High Commission on Refugees, UNHCR, in 1950 to better assist the refugees all around the world. Since then its role has expanded. The organizations own mission statement is to reduce situations of displacement, safeguard the rights and well-being of the displaced, ensure the rights to seek asylum, assist the displaced in returning to their own homes or finding permanent refuge in other countries, all while paying especially paying attention to the needs of children.

One of the issues that is clearly evident on its face is whether the UNHCR has the authority concerning peoples who by definition are not refugees. While the body was created to solely deal with refugees when it was founded, the UN General

Assembly (UNGA) and the UNHCR Executive Commission has authorized the organizations involvement with other types of displaced peoples, including the internally



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

displaced. However, while this grants the UNHCR the authority within the UN to act upon the needs of IDPs; it does not mean it can violate a state's sovereignty. This is an issue because IDPs are still citizens of the state they are in, and therefore still under the jurisdiction of their home country. Normally this is not an issue, as most states are eager to receive assistance when crises displace large portions of their populations, but when it is the actions of the state that cause the crisis it can quickly become complicated.

² UNHCR. "Internally Displaced People." UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html>



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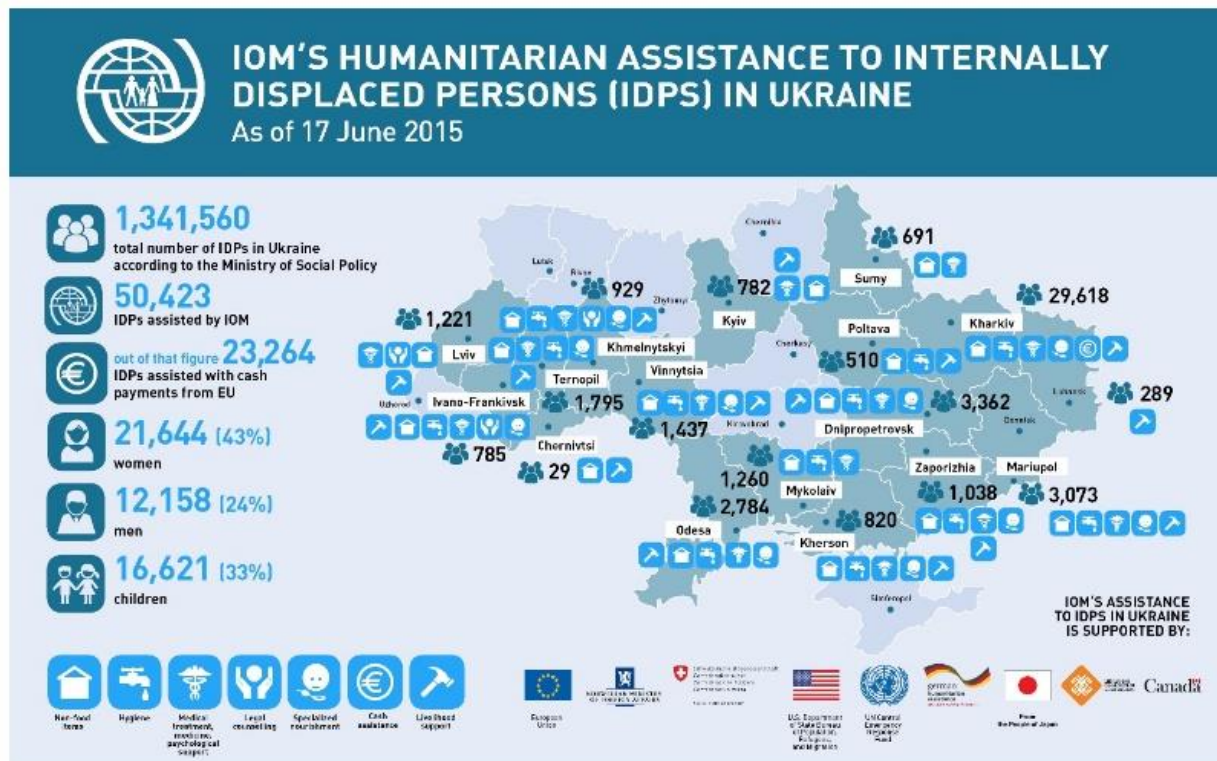
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An additional issue facing IDPs is the fact that none are registered. Asylum Seekers and refugees, except in certain cases, are required to have gone through a state's asylum system. An IDP, because they never crossed an international border, has no such required registration. As a result accurately knowing the exact needs,

There are many places in the world where IDPs can be found in staggering numbers. At the end of 2014 38 million people were internally displaced around the world. A figure not fully including several million whom were recently forced to flee due to events in 2015. To better examine these tragedies once can look at different



numbers, and locations of IDPs can be extra challenging.³

instances around the world where crises have occurred and what difficulties the international community has had to face while trying to alleviate their hard ship.

Current Events and Case Studies

³UNHCR. "UNHCR Mission Statement." UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49ed83046.html>

This will attempt to give you a general outline of differing instances of internal displacement, but should not be



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thought of as the only places where IDPs can be found in large numbers. If you would like a complete regional analysis the UNHCR and other sites have very good information.

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c206.html>

Myanmar

With the largest IDP population in East Asia Myanmar is the home of over 400,000 IDPs. Many of them have been forced to flee due to civil and ethnic conflict between multiple different groups over the past decade. While fighting between the government and separatist forces has lasted 40 years, recent inter-ethnic fighting has also taken its toll. In some locations the separatist groups maintain de-facto governance in some parts of the country. The UNHCR and other sources say that almost half of the ethnic population of the Kachin and Rakhine have been forced turned into IDPs. The sectarian violence in Rakhine against the country's minority Muslim population there propagated by radical Buddhist is especially worrying.⁴

Syria & Iraq

⁴The Economist. "The most persecuted people on Earth?"

<http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21654124-myanmars-muslim-minority-have-been-attacked-impunity-stripped-vote-and-driven>

The Syrian Civil War has been raging since 2011, and since then an estimated 6.5 million Syrians have been internally displaced. The crisis has put enormous strain on the Syria, and that states around it as 4 million other Syrians have also fled to more stable states. The UNHCR has estimated that 10.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria. While the Syrian government based out of Damascus has allowed the UNHCR to assist with IDPs inside its country, and between January and September of 2014 it supported 3 million IDPs in the country with essential materials there are still many in danger of dying due to starvation or lack of proper medical treatment.

In Iraq some 1.8 million people have fled, many of which into the Kurdish region. In response to the rapidly developing crisis. The UNHCR declared an emergency and a rapidly scaled up its presence in Iraq. In August of 2014 the UNHCR organized its largest single aid operation in more than a decade assisting 500,000 IDPs who were in dire need.

Both of these situations will require continual assistance and an increase in resources to stave off catastrophe as winter sets in and the number of displaced increases. Security for the camps is an additional issue due to the instability of the region as an active war zone.

Somalia



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Somalia has one of the worst displacement crises in the world. Over two million Somalis have been forcibly displaced. Approximately one million of these are internally displaced, and the other million or so are mostly spread about its neighbors, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Yemen. With a mix of political instability and famine nearly a million more Somalis are at risk. The government that assumed power in 2012 exercises next to no power in its' territory, and the country is effectively run by mix of extremist organization like Al Shabaab, regional war lords, or by de facto independent states such as Somaliland⁵. The humanitarian situation in Somalia seems to only be deteriorating as the amount of Somalis at risk for famine is rising and the pressure the situation is placing on Somalia's neighbors grows.

In 2013 the High Commissioner of the UNHCR launched the Global Initiative on Somalia aimed at returning millions of Somali refugees to their homes. Unfortunately due to the situation in the country large scale voluntary repatriation cannot yet be achieved, but returns are supported by the UNHCR when they occur.⁶

⁵ Refugees International. "Somalia | Refugees International." Somalia | Refugees International. <http://refugeesinternational.org/where-we-work/africa/somalia>

⁶ UNHCR. "High Commissioner's Global Initiative on Somali Refugees." <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/527b8f7d6.html>

*Democratic Republic of the Congo
(DRC)*

The number of internally displaced peoples in the DRC is a very difficult figure to define. The UN and other organizations have difficulty tracking if people have returned to their homes or if they have found a different permeant solution. They are also not always able to discern between IDPs who have been forced to flee multiple times due to successive crises, and those who are newly displaced. With that in mind the Internally Displaced Monitoring Center has estimated that there are 2,857,400 IDPs in the DRC. Most of the IDPs are scattered through the Easter sections of the country where communication and infrastructure is poor and armed rebel groups roam the country.⁷

Angola

As a country that used to have some 4 million displaced, 3.5 of which were IDPs, due to decades of conflict, Angola has since then repaired much of the damage done. The UNHCR assisted for many years those in needs, and aided the return of many to their homes. Programs for returning people to their homes is one of the most important tasks once a restabilized. The UNHCR helped facilitate this by providing trucks and buses transportation

⁷ IDMC. "Myanmar IDP Figure Analysis." <http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/myanmar/figures-analysis>



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the displaced and their belonging, and also small cash grants to aid their return to normal life.⁸

Conclusion

The world needs a comprehensive multipronged solution to assist the millions of IDPs around the world more than ever. The UN is in a perfect position to create an international framework to assist the IDPs all around the world with the multifaceted issues they face. The UNHCR has done well, but has many difficulties facing it, and could possibly be reformed to better fit the world and political realities we live in. Other issues like safety for further expulsion for persecuted minorities could be addressed. Providing aid to huge amounts of people is difficult already, but doing so in and around active combat zones when the protection of the aid and the IDPs themselves are at risk is a monumental challenge. One that can be further compounded when the UN needs to coordinate aid to regions not controlled by their recognized governments, or when the number and status of the IDPs is not certain. These tasks and more are what is in front of the body. For the sake of those without homes now and in the future we hope you can find a lasting solution.

⁸UNHCR. "Last group of Angolan refugees returns home from Botswana as voluntary repatriation programme winds down."
<http://www.unhcr.org/527390f39.html>



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