NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

Civic Update
Forcibly Displaced Populations

Global numbers of forcibly displaced persons have reached unprecedented levels and affect every region where NDI works. Displacement situations in Syria, Colombia, Afghanistan and South Sudan count among the most severe and protracted, while those in Myanmar and Bangladesh have recently intensified. Regardless of the specific circumstances, displacement is a highly disruptive event for an individual, and when it occurs en masse, can significantly impact the social, economic and political development of entire countries or regions. Vulnerable and dispossessed, displaced persons are often excluded from political processes both in their country of origin and place of resettlement. Without access to representation or means of participation, this type of exclusion can have serious negative impacts on political stability, social cohesion and economic outcomes, while posing a risk as a contributing factor for radicalization. Ensuring that displaced people maintain a civic identity despite their situation is one key factor for mitigating the challenges associ-

Earthquake-affected people inside a temporary shelter in Dolakha District, Nepal, answering surveys on adequacy of relief material.

ated with displacement. This issue of the Civic Update explores how displaced persons can be factored into democracy assistance programs and how NDI has worked with these populations.

Who Are Forcibly Displaced Persons?

Forced displacement occurs when individuals or communities are obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence. It can result from structural drivers and sudden events, including armed conflict, political persecution, systemic discrimination, natural disasters and epidemics.[1] Weak and fragile states are typically the most vulnerable to these factors and the least capable of responding. Different reasons for displacement, location of displacement, and phases of the displacement process give rise to distinct categories of displaced persons. The two most significant categories are internally displaced persons (IDPs) - those who are displaced by crises and remain within their home country - and refugees - those who have left their home country and are unwilling or unable to return due to fear of persecution.

Other categories of displaced persons include economic refugees (people who have left their home country in search of secure livelihoods), asylum-seekers (people seeking international protection whose refugee status has not yet been determined), stateless persons (people not

Inside this Issue

considered nationals by any state), and returnees (former refugees who have returned to their country of origin).[2] Depending on where they fall in these categories, forcibly displaced persons typically have access to different legal protections and settlement options. However, because reasons for displacement often overlap it can be difficult to draw clear distinctions between the immediate cause and underlying drivers of particular cases. As a result, in practice it is often challenging to assign displaced people to these legal categories and identify sustainable displacement solutions.[3]

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines **IDPs** as "persons or groups of 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."[4]

A **refugee** is a "person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence who is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on his or her race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group."[5]

Current Trends in Global Forced Displacement

Over the past twenty years, there has been a drastic increase in displacement levels worldwide. According to the UNHCR, between 1997 and 2016 the global population of forcibly displaced persons doubled from 33.9 million to 65.6 million. Most of this rise took place between 2012 and 2015 due to conflicts in Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The majority of these people were displaced within their home countries: of the 65.6 million, 40.3 million people were IDPs, whereas 2.5 million were refugees and 2.8 million were asylum-seekers.[6]

Conflict and natural disasters are still the main triggers for displacement today, with 6.9 million new internal displacements in 2016 alone due to violence, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, and 24.2 million from sudden-onset natural disasters, primarily in East Asia and the Pacific. In 2016 over 1.4 million refugees were newly displaced, driven largely by conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.[7] Syrians are the largest forcibly displaced population in the world and Colombians the second largest; Colombia and Syria are also currently the countries with the largest internally displaced populations, at 7.4 and 6.3 million respectively. The primary countries of origin for refugees in 2016 were Syria and Afghanistan.[8]

Scenarios for Displaced Communities

Displacement can look very different from one situation to the next and result in distinct needs and priorities for forcibly displaced populations. One critical factor is length of displacement, as groups in the early stages of displacement can require very different interventions than those in protracted situations of five or more years. In the immediate aftermath of a large-scale forced displacement, humanitarian aid is usually the first step to meet urgent needs and help save lives. Over longer time frames, issues like social integration in host communities, finding economic opportunities and participation in political settlements or peace processes may come into play. These scenarios will differ depending on whether displaced persons are living separately in camps or in communities with the local population.

Place of settlement also significantly affects the circumstances of displaced groups. Today, approximately 95 percent of IDPs and 84 percent of refugees live in low- and lower-middle-income countries: 30 percent are hosted in Africa and 26 percent are hosted in the Middle East and North Africa. Major host countries typically have limited resources to cope with a rapidly growing population or respond to the specific needs of displaced people.[9] As a result, in many cases displaced people have difficulty accessing basic services and finding sufficient livelihood opportunities. Meanwhile, other factors like language barriers or ethnic, religious and racial differences may result in challenges to social integration. When combined with perceptions that internally displaced or refugee populations are straining the local economy, this can cause tensions with host communities; these trends are not limited to lower-income countries, and have also emerged in Europe and North America.

Moreover, legal status impacts displacement cases; while refugees have special status in international law, in practice their rights inevitably vary depending on host countries' legal frameworks. This may affect their right to work, own property, obtain identification documents, and access government social protections and services.[10] IDPs are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as all other citizens within their country, including the right to political participation.

Distinct displacement factors also inform the availability of potential solutions. According to the UNHCR, possible sustainable living solutions for displaced people include voluntary repatriation to their home country, third country resettlement in a hospitable host country, or durable

Continued

local integration in the country of asylum.[11] Their place of origin, the original grievances that gave rise to their displacement, and their desire to return all affect the viability of these different options.

Identity and Displacement

Identity factors such as gender, age, disability, religion, language, ethnicity and sexual orientation play an important role throughout the displacement process, causing individuals to experience displacement differently, especially regarding risks to their safety and ability to integrate or access services in host communities. Women face specific risks as targets of sexual exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence, and also tend to bear the responsibility of caretaking for children and family members during the displacement process. In new host communities, women often face restricted access to livelihoods and a lack of gender-sensitive assistance.[12] Disability can amplify the challenges of forced displacement, as people with disabilities often face barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance, health care and other services.[13] LGBTI individuals may experience abusive treatment, harassment or sexual and gender-based violence in camps or host communities, difficulty obtaining correct identification documents, and discrimination in access to health care, psychosocial support, employment and education.[14] Additionally, members of ethnic, religious or racial minorities may be unwelcome among host communities or within the displaced population itself as a result of discrimination and xenophobia.[15]

How Does NDI Work With Forcibly Displaced Populations?

There are various entry points and opportunities NDI has used to work with forcibly displaced persons. As described above, options for including displaced populations in programs are usually informed by the political processes available to them in their host country or community; this can look very different for IDPs than for refugees. In recent years, NDI approaches have included:

- Helping displaced persons vote where they are located through voter education and information, GOTV campaigns and election monitoring (Haiti, Nigeria, South Sudan)
- Conducting public opinion research and needs assessments to identify the interests and concerns of IDPs and refugees (Iraq, Nepal)
- Facilitating decision-making in long-term camps and settlements (Syria)
- Civic education to help displaced populations understand their political rights and avenues available for addressing their priorities (Syria)
- Supporting the social integration of returnees or newly settled refugees and/or IDPs (Central African Republic, Jordan)
- Working with country-of-origin governments to address the drivers of displacement, such as security issues or political exclusion and marginalization, and establishing the conditions for return (Central African Republic)
- Supporting transitional political processes related to displacement such as reparations and legislation affecting resettlement (Colombia)
- Identifying CSOs that represent displaced persons to include them in existing program activities as appropriate (Haiti)

There are certain conditions that either support or are required for NDI to work with forcibly displaced persons, which include:

- Appropriate government permissions
- Access to IDP and/or refugee camps
- An existing legal framework for the electoral participation and/or political representation of displaced persons
- Needs and priorities of the displaced population are at a phase where they can be addressed via a political process

The following examples demonstrate how NDI has made use of entry points and opportunities to work with forcibly displaced populations in several regions.

Public Opinion Research for Responsive Governance and Stabilization (Iraq, Nepal)

In **Iraq**, approximately 660,000 people were newly displaced in 2016 due to military campaigns to liberate territory held by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In total, about 3 million Iraqis have been displaced since 2015.[16] As Iraqi security forces continue to reassert control over land held by ISIS, the government faces the challenge of identifying an inclusive reconstruction and stabilization plan for good governance. To support this effort, in 2017 NDI undertook public opinion research to explore citizens' visions for the future and opinions on what governance structures could promote long-term peace and stability. The program's goal was to provide impartial, evidence-based research to elected representatives, CSOs and the international community to contribute to creating a political framework to fill the post-liberation vacuum.

In partnership with the Iraq-based Independent Institute for Administrative and Civil Society Studies (IIACSS) and international research firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, NDI conducted twelve focus groups, two each in Baghdad, Basra, Salahaddin, Anbar, Erbil, and the Khazer M1 IDP camp in Ninewa. In Erbil, participants were all IDPs from Ninewa province; in the Khazer M1 camp, participants

were IDPs who had lived under ISIS for one year. Though internally displaced focus group participants said they had been well-treated by other citizens, they felt the government was not providing them with necessary resources, or doing enough to rebuild infrastructure and provide compensation to those most impacted by ISIS. By including the perspectives of new and long-term IDPs along with other citizens in the focus group research, NDI provided government officials and parties access to broadly representative opinions to guide plans for inclusive governance, reconstruction and stabilization in liberated areas.

Earthquake victims in a focus group discussion conducted by J4A in Dolakha District, Nepal.

Nepal

Approximately 2.8 million people were internally displaced by the earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015. To ensure that citizens' voices were included in post-earthquake reconstruction efforts, NDI supported its partner, the National Election Observation Committee (NEOC), to create a monitoring plan for aid delivery and reconstruction efforts in key areas. To improve accountability in relief and reconstruction processes, NEOC conducted focus group discussions with earthquake survivors, almost all of whom had been displaced from their homes.

NDI also assisted Justice for All (J4A) and the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) to undertake post-earthquake monitoring of aid delivery and government reconstruction efforts with a focus on gender and inclusion of marginalized groups such as elderly people, persons with disabilities and caste minorities. Recognizing the particular challenges that affect women and minorities in displacement, J4A and FWLD conducted focus group discussions and citizens' report card studies with earthquake survivors, most of whom were displaced, to identify and report on women and minorities' priorities and access to aid. J4A and FWLD then compiled briefs, organized press conferences and held policy dialogues to share findings with key stakeholders, and conducted awareness-raising activities on equitable and gender-sensitive relief distribution.

Civic Education and Organizing (Syria)

In 2016, **Syria** was the only country in which more than half its population was displaced, either within its borders or in nearby countries. NDI's work in Syria takes place in opposition-held areas in Northern Syria and aims to build citizens' understanding of democratic practices and help equip Syrians with the organizing skills they will need to improve governance in their communities now, as well as those that would be useful in a future political transition.

NDI engages IDPs in its Citizen Syria civic education program, which brings concepts of democratic society inclusive of rule of law and protection of human rights closer to Syrians, and empowers them to participate in local-level organizing to improve daily living conditions in their communities. Through this program, NDI supports Syrian partner organizations to hold civic education sessions on democratic practices, framing civic education as a key first step to understanding how to encourage local decision-makers to respond to citizen needs. NDI-trained facilitators then help participants conduct needs assessments and develop advocacy plans that engage local leaders on key issues. Given the massive influx of IDPs to the liberated areas where NDI works, displaced persons take part in these program activities in high numbers.

Under the Citizen Syria program, much of the advocacy work that displaced persons participate in relates to the conditions of IDP camps and needs of camp residents. In Lattakia province, a majority of needs assessments were conducted in IDP camps, where citizens prioritized immediate necessities like tents, clean water, sanitation services and relief aid distribution. Facilitators conducted civic discussions on active citizenship and human rights, most of which were attended entirely by IDPs. Facilitators then assisted citizens to develop an advocacy campaign for priority needs identified during the assessments, including procuring a camp generator and establishing a school for IDP camp residents. In Idlib province, Citizen Syria participants successfully advocated for the renovation of one IDP camp's only medical center. The campaign team held meetings with camp management, conducted outreach using social media and posters, and engaged in fundraising activities to make the center operational. In the city of Azaz in Aleppo province, another campaign team advocated for the appointment of a staff person for each of the three IDP camps to maintain sanitation and hygiene. They held meetings with the local council and the director of an INGO relief office, who agreed to hire three people living in the camp to provide cleaning and maintenance services.

At the end of 2016, NDI expanded Citizen Syria to three newly-liberated areas in northern Syria including IDPs from Raqqa currently residing in Hassakah province. In sessions with these IDPs, facilitators led 91 participants in

Continued

discussions on human rights, citizenship, rule of law, the branches of government, and the separation of powers. During the needs assessments, IDPs discussed not only basic needs and services, but also prioritized social integration concerns due to their displacement as Arabs to a Kurdish province. A facilitator also discussed the need for coordinated action on emergency planning with IDPs from Raqqa, and then worked with a citizen group on a campaign for raising awareness of emergency preparedness. As political developments in Syria unfold, NDI will look for opportunities to expand program activities further into liberated areas with large IDP populations.

Supporting Electoral Participation (Haiti, Nigeria, South Sudan)

Northern Nigerian states with high rates of forced displacement: Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

Displacement in **Nigeria** has largely been driven by the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast region and military operations against the extremist group. The most impacted states include Adamawa, Borno and Yobe in the Lake Chad basin, where nearly two million citizens have been forced from their homes.[17] Prior to the 2015 national elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) created designated voting centers for people displaced within their home state, recognizing the importance of enabling IDPs to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

In the lead-up to the elections, NDI identified the presence of large groups of IDPs in the north as a specific challenge to voter participation on election day. As part of an effort to increase the electoral participation of marginalized groups, NDI supported its partner, the Centre for Health and Community Development (CHAD), to undertake targeted voter education, information and GOTV campaigns for IDPs in five camps in Adamawa, nine in Borno and five in Yobe. To gain access to the camps, CHAD's state coordinators worked with the Nigeria Emergency and Management Agency, the State Emergency

Management Agency, the National Orientation Agency and the INEC.

NDI organized a training-of-trainers for CHAD staff on voter education, including communications and messaging strategies for targeting IDPs and tactics for getting out the IDP vote. CHAD then created Camp Voter Education Committees (CVECs) in all nineteen of the identified camps. These were comprised of registered IDP voters already in possession of their permanent voter cards (PVCs), who mobilized other voters and distributed posters and handbills in English and Hausa on how to locate polling centers and collect their PVCs. The CVECs also gathered contact information from voters in camps, and using this list, CHAD sent out SMS blasts.

As the election approached, CHAD produced and aired informational radio jingles in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, encouraging IDPs to vote and providing important information about when and where to do so. Although IDPs had displayed low levels of interest in voting, NDI-supported campaigns encouraged eligible IDPs to participate and provided them the information they needed to cast their ballots.

Haiti

In the lead-up to the November 2010 legislative and presidential elections in Haiti, approximately 1.5 million Haitians remained displaced across 1,300 IDP camps from the January 2010 earthquake. The presence of high levels of IDPs raised serious concerns about voter registration problems and the risk of electoral violence. As part of a broader domestic observation program, NDI assisted the Federation for Organized Committees in Camps (Fédération des comités organisateurs des camps de rescapés - FEKOK), a youth group organized in IDP camps, to implement an election observation focused specifically on IDPs. NDI provided FEKOK with technical assistance on selecting and training observers, choosing polling centers close to IDP camps, planning a deployment strategy and processing data for the final report. During the first round of elections, FEKOK deployed 250 observers in 58 IDP camps in the Port-au-Prince area, capturing important information on election-day conditions in the camps.

NDI assisted FEKOK to observe the March 2011 runoff election, as well as conduct a pilot voter education project with IDP committees in twelve camps. As a result, IDPS were directly involved in the electoral process and felt included in political life despite their displacement. At the same time, NDI provided key information on IDPs' access to a free and fair vote to USAID and Haitian media.

Continued

South Sudan

During the South Sudan 2011 referendum for self-determination, NDI supported its partner, the Sudanese Group for Democracy and Elections (SuNDE), to conduct voter registration observation and issue statements on the registration process. At the time, there were 60,000 confirmed referendum registrants in out-of-country voting (OCV) locations. NDI assisted SuNDE in finding volunteer observers in the OCV countries, using diaspora when possible in addition to volunteers from local domestic observation networks. SuNDE then deployed a team of observers in six of the eight OCV locations: Australia, Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Promoting Reconciliation and Social Cohesion (Central African Republic, Jordan)
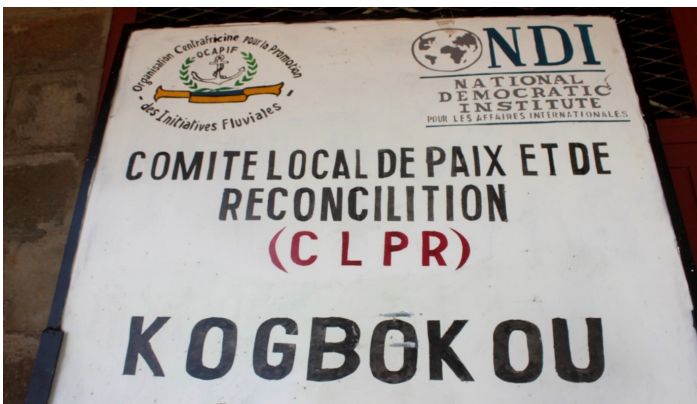
Sign for the local peace committee in Kogbokou, CAR.

Conflict and violence from civil war in the **Central African Republic (CAR)** has been ongoing since 2012, pitting Muslim and Christian communities against each other and contributing to regional destabilization. By the end of 2014, more than 800,000 civilians were forcibly displaced either within CAR or in neighboring countries. In particular, Muslims fleeing violence in the capital, Bangui, escaped to the north and to nearby countries.

To support the transitional political process and help forge a sense of common national identity, in 2014 NDI began providing assistance to local partner organizations to conduct inter-community peacebuilding activities in conflict affected areas. With NDI assistance, three local partner organizations established and supported local peace and reconciliation committees (CLPRs) to serve as mediators and encourage the conditions for displaced per-

sons to return to their home communities. NDI's partners Women, Action and Development in Central Africa (FADEC), the Central Organization for the Promotion of Initiatives Along the River Basin (OCAPIF) and the Central African League for Human Rights (LCDH) trained CLPR representatives on conflict mitigation, developing community solidarity plans, respecting the rule of law, and civic education. They also conducted awareness-raising discussions on peaceful interfaith coexistence, held activities to encourage tolerance such as sporting events, skits and traditional dance performances, and organized meetings for community leaders on facilitating displaced people's return.

As part of this program, partners arranged community forums for CLPRs and citizens to discuss shared issues, develop recommendations, and meet with local authorities to present the recommendations. Most meetings focused on ways to encourage displaced people to return, including liberating their property, establishing welcome committees, and conducting outreach to displaced groups. CLPRs also promoted social cohesion by supporting the construction of common spaces to unite Muslims and Christians, including a market area and community garden.

In 2016, a village chief stated that, thanks in part to the CLPR's social cohesion work and awareness-raising on displaced persons' right to reclaim their property, 45 displaced Muslims had returned to his village. By organizing local-level reconciliation initiatives, NDI partners strengthened interfaith understanding and social cohesion, helping establish the conditions necessary for the return of IDPs and refugees who had earlier fled violence.

Activity participants raising a peace and reconciliation trophy in Mongoumba, CAR.

Groups of Syrian refugees and Jordanian citizens discuss citizenship and human rights during Ana Usharek Mujtam3i sessions (above and right).

Jordan

Since the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Jordan has received a large influx of Syrian refugees. At the end of 2016, Jordan hosted the second greatest number of refugees relative to the national population in the world, where one in eleven people was a refugee.[18] Most Syrian refugees live integrated in urban areas, and in some places tensions have risen between Syrians and Jordanians over issues like resource scarcity and job competition.

In May 2015, NDI launched the Ana Usharek Mujtam3i (I Participate - My Community) program to help mitigate tensions between Syrians and Jordanians by providing a space for dialogue and collective action on key community issues. Through NDI-facilitated discussions and forums, Syrians and Jordanians identified common community problems and cooperated in planning initiatives to address them.

The program was implemented in 165 neighborhoods in the Irbid and Mafraq governorates, both of which host large numbers of Syrian refugees. 45 joint civic groups engaged in discussions on shared problems and formed initiatives, eleven of which reached the implementation phase. Initiatives included providing extra classes for Syrian refugee children and renovating a public garden for Syrian and Jordanian children to play. The program provided both groups with knowledge of democratic practices and civic participation, while also promoting social cohesion and better intergroup relations between refugees and the host community.

Supporting Displaced Populations Through a Transitional Political Process (Colombia)

Over fifty years of conflict between the Colombian government and the Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - FARC) has resulted in large-scale and protracted internal displacement. With numbers reaching 7.7 million by the end of 2016, Colombians are the second-largest forcibly displaced population in the world.[19] The Colombian government has implemented an advanced legal framework for IDPs, and the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law entitles IDPs and other victims of the conflict to reparations.[20] This includes addressing victims' grievances by supporting their participation in policy design and implementation through Victims Participation Roundtables (VPRs).

The passage of the 2011 law was an entry point for NDI to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to VPRs in various departments. Since 2013, NDI workshops have trained VPR members to hold internal elections, develop strategic plans, obtain funding, conduct advocacy, monitor public policies related to the Victims' Law and meet with local and national authorities to present recommendations.

Meeting between Victims Participation Roundtable members in Cartagena, Colombia and political parties to discuss public policies impacting victims.

Resources Cited

1. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2017) "Global Report on Internal Displacement."

2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2016) "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016." http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5943e8a34/global-trends-forced-displacement-2016.html

Governance and Social Development Resource Center (GSDRC) Applied Knowledge Services (2017). "Migration, Forced Displacement and Social Protection." http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Migration-Forced-Displacement-and-Social-Protection-2017-06-20-BL.pdf

3. IDMC (2017).

4. UNHCR (2016).

5. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OCHR). "Questions and Answers About IDPs." http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/Issues.aspx

6. UNHCR (2016).

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. UNHCR (2016); IDMC (2017).

10. GSDRC (2017).

11. UNHCR (2016).

12. Governance and Social Development Resource Center (GSDRC) Applied Knowledge Services (2016) "Women and Girls in Forced or Protracted Displacement." https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HDQ1364_0.pdf

13. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) "Need to Know Guide 1: Working with Persons with Disabilities in Forced Displacement." http://www.unhcr.org/4ec3c81c9.pdf

14. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) "Need to Know Guide 2: Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex Persons in Forced Displacement." http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4e6073972.pdf

15. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons." http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/idps/4c2355229/handbook-protection-internally-displaced-persons.html

16. IDMC (2017).

17. Ibid.

18. UNHCR (2016).

19. IDMC (2017).

20. Ibid.

Soccer team participating in OCAPIF activities, CAR.

National Democratic Institute