



BRIEFING PAPER

TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

Internal displacement and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

13 JULY 2017

As governments, international agencies, civil society and experts gather for the annual high-level political forum on sustainable development in New York, internal displacement is unlikely to be the first thing on their minds. While reviewing progress against the targets and indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the negative impacts of development on vulnerable people, including those affected by crises, conflicts and disasters, will be left out of the discussion. And yet they should be central.

Efforts towards achieving the six goals in focus at the 2017 forum have the potential to bring about both positive and negative change. Investments may catalyse progress towards one or several goals, but they can also create unexpected setbacks and unplanned social, economic and environmental consequences not accounted for in the long list of targets and indicators for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

One such consequence is the forced displacement of people from their homes and livelihoods. This briefing paper explores the relationship between the six goals under review this year and internal displacement across the globe. Of them, SDG 9 on resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and innovation is of particular interest, because

progress in this area can increase marginalised groups' exposure and vulnerability, cause new displacement and prolong or exacerbate existing situations. This in turn may jeopardise the political, economic and social development gains that countries hope to achieve.

A unique opportunity

As the international community continues its efforts toward providing sustainable wellbeing and realising human rights for all, its pledge to "leave no one behind" risks becoming the first casualty of progress. The 17 SDGs all promise significant investments - in health, education, employment generation and infrastructure to name just a few - that aim to improve people's social and economic conditions, particularly for the disadvantaged.

This, however, assumes that such investments are made in a risk-sensitive and equitable manner. In reality, the fact that investments in one area may have negative impacts in another is not considered, nor is it recognised that competing interests mean that win-win situations may be the exception rather than the rule. As only limited attention is paid to the potential for negative impacts inherent in all development projects and processes, ultimately real progress may become elusive.

KEY MESSAGES

To meet the 2030 Agenda principle of “leaving no one behind” and ensure displacement does not undermine the achievement of the SDGs, countries will need to:

- Consider the connections between various SDGs when planning investments in development to implement the 2030 agenda, to make sure progress towards one does not set back advances in others.
- Ensure the investments made to achieve each SDG are based on sound assessments that consider the risk of severe social and economic disruption, including internal displacement.
- Assess the potential negative impacts of both new and protracted displacement associated with development investments together with those affected.
- Assess the opportunity costs and contingent liabilities governments face when the effectiveness of development investments, and particularly those in infrastructure, is compromised by heightened vulnerability, unviable markets and large-scale displacement.
- Apply the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines for Development-based Evictions where displacement is unavoidable, to mitigate the negative impacts on those affected and ensure their access to rights and economic and social integration in new locations.
- Monitor the number and situation of people displaced by investments undertaken to advance progress towards the 2030 agenda and report on how adverse effects are being addressed to avoid undermining progress toward other goals and targets.

One of these negative impacts is forced displacement. At the end of 2016, 40.3 million people were living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence around the world, with 6.9 million new displacements during the year. More than 24.2 million people were displaced by disasters during the year, and the number still displaced as a result of disasters before 2016 is unknown.¹ Around 15 million people are also estimated to have been displaced by development projects every year since the mid-2000s.² Addressing the causes and impacts of what amounts to a global displacement crisis is primarily a development issue, and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development represents an opportunity to resolve it.³

Displacement and development are inter-related in numerous ways. First, limited or uneven development can lead to displacement. Poverty, inequality and weak rule of law accumulate into conditions of instability, which increase the risk of tensions and conflict. This can cause and prolong displacement, as can the lack of disaster early warning, preparedness, risk management and adaptation measures, and poorly planned and rapid urbanisation in countries prone to natural hazards. Lack of development can also hinder the return of people to devastated areas and affect the feasibility of other settlement options that internally displaced people (IDPs) wish to pursue.

The current crisis in north-east Nigeria and the wider Lake Chad region shows how uneven development can eventually

lead to and then prolong internal displacement. The genesis of the militant group Boko Haram, whose insurgency is reported as the main cause of flight for almost all of Nigeria’s nearly two million IDPs, has been traced in large part to the frustration of disenfranchised youth denied livelihood opportunities and education.⁴ Their marginalisation has been made worse by dwindling access to water and grazing pasture as Lake Chad has shrunk by 90 per cent over the last 45 years.⁵ Poor governance exacerbates resulting instability and is an additional driver of conflict in the country.⁶

Second, development investments can cause displacement. Across the world the construction of dams, roads, mines and urban infrastructure, and the designation of conservation areas have historically forced large numbers of people off their land, as states undertake compulsory land acquisitions based on claims of public interest. Rather than being priority beneficiaries of development projects, those displaced tend to end up worse off.⁷

In Myanmar, the development of commercial agriculture has been a cornerstone of the government’s economic agenda since the early 2000s. The ceasefire it agreed in 2012 with Karen rebels fighting for autonomy has allowed access to areas that were previously too insecure, opening them up to foreign investment and land acquisition. The process, however, has involved dispossession and displacement, and the subsistence farming communities affected have received little protection or compensation from the state, leaving them impoverished and marginalised as a result.⁸

Third, displacement creates a range of social and economic development challenges. Those affected tend to lose their land, homes, property, employment and livelihoods, and limit their access to healthcare, education and basic services. Displacement further atomises families, communities and networks, leaving IDPs at greater risk of violence, trafficking and other forms of abuse. It can also contribute to higher levels of exposure and vulnerability of those displaced and of host communities to disasters.

The fact that investments in one area may have negative impacts in another is not considered, nor is it recognised that competing interests mean that win-win situations may be the exception rather than the rule

In Bangladesh, poor delta communities are repeatedly displaced by recurrent storms and tidal floods. Their livelihoods have been eroded as saltwater intrusion gradually makes agricultural land infertile, making them poorer still. Those unable to afford the high cost of relocation and resettlement elsewhere continue to be exposed, while those able to move join the urban poor in sprawling informal settlements where disaster risk is concentrated in addition to other protection tasks.⁹

Fourth, displacement can impede or even reverse the achievement of national development goals, as states divert funds away from longer-term aims in an effort to resolve immediate crises. It

can also destabilise the communities and regions affected and lead to renewed tensions and conflict, undermining efforts to establish peace, prosperity and equality.

In Colombia, over 93 per cent of IDPs live in cities and most have gravitated to informal settlements in peripheral areas where they typically endure inadequate living conditions, limited access to basic services, few economic opportunities and risk of eviction and onward displacement.¹⁰ The influx has adversely affected social cohesion and land management in several Colombian cities as well as delivery of services, including transport, water, housing, education, health and emergency services.¹¹ The population dynamics and socio-economic inequalities that have resulted from this displacement have been significant stress factors that have undermined urban development.¹²

The 2030 agenda has the potential to eliminate underlying drivers of displacement and increase resilience of IDPs and host communities

Given these connections between displacement and development, the 2030 agenda represents a significant opportunity: it has the potential to eliminate underlying drivers of displacement and increase resilience of IDPs and host communities. In turn, countries that manage to take this opportunity and successfully address internal displacement, have an advantage in establishing more stable, inclusive and prosperous societies.¹³

Displacement is a persistent and growing global crisis, but the 2030 agenda does not include goals or targets to address it. It does, however, acknowledge that displacement can reverse development progress and pledges to leave no one behind, including IDPs, whom it recognises as a vulnerable group that must be empowered. In adopting the agenda, states also resolved to meet the needs of people affected by humanitarian emergencies and ensure full respect for displaced people's human rights.

Internal displacement and SDGs in focus in 2017

Progress toward implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is reviewed at an annual high-level political forum in New York, and each year discussions focus on a selected number of SDGs. Those under review in 2017 are SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 2 on hunger, SDG 3 on health, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 9 on industry and infrastructure and SDG 14 on the marine environment. Internal displacement is relevant to all of them, and must be considered when designing, implementing and monitoring plans to achieve them.

SDG 1

Displacement is a driver of poverty. Poverty also increases the likelihood of renewed displacement. Displaced people lose their jobs, livelihoods and land, along with property assets, social resources and networks, and



legal documentation. This in turn regularly prevents them from accessing services, employment and social protection. The poverty that displaced people experience is likely to be more extreme and persistent than that experienced by others in society, which can exacerbate inequality.¹⁴

The longer displacement continues, the greater the risk that IDPs lose the will and skills to be self-sufficient, and instead become dependent on aid and vulnerable to economic exploitation.¹⁵ Disasters force around 26 million people into poverty each year, and in cases such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, extreme poverty is a major barrier to IDPs resolving their displacement.¹⁶

SDG 2

Access to food can be disrupted during crisis, with hunger fuelling internal and cross-border displacement. This is the case with current conflict and violence in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.¹⁷ Efforts to address hunger by increasing agricultural productivity can also cause displacement when land is expropriated for agribusiness.



Loss of access to land, livelihoods, livestock and markets regularly limits IDPs' ability to produce or purchase food, and leaves them reliant on humanitarian aid or charitable donations. Culturally insensitive or nutritionally inappropriate food aid may lead to malnutrition and disease, particularly among the most vulnerable members of displaced communities.¹⁸ Such vulnerabilities tend to get worse as humanitarian aid is curtailed, or in extreme cases where starvation is used as a method of warfare.

SDG 3

IDPs run the risk of attack and injury during their flight.¹⁹ They are also likely to lose access to medicines and healthcare, whether because the crisis disrupts the operation of facilities, or they flee to remote or dangerous areas, lose documentation or are discriminated against. Even when services and medication are available, their cost frequently puts adequate healthcare out of IDPs' reach.²⁰ A review of research on IDPs' health issues in Africa shows they are disproportionately affected by malnutrition, malaria, respiratory infections, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.²¹



Displacement tends to aggravate existing physical and mental health issues and new conditions often arise as the result of deprivation, injuries, trauma and inadequate housing and sanitation. The disintegration of social and community networks may also cause or contribute to mental health problems. Five years after the "Great East Japan Earthquake" disaster, many evacuees were suffering from sleeping disorders, anxiety, loneliness and depression. The phenomenon of 'Kodokushi' (or people dying in isolation) among displaced people living in temporary housing had also increased.²²

SDG 5

Displacement can significantly change the dynamics and patterns of previously established gender roles and responsibilities. Families may be forced to separate with men staying behind to protect property, men being killed in the crisis or men migrating to find work. In conflict situations men may also be suspected as serving as combatants and are as a result at risk of going missing, or being killed or disabled in combat. Men may also be sexually assaulted during displacement and are disproportionately targeted for forced recruitment into militias.



Where male heads of household are absent, internally displaced women are forced to take on the role of head of the family on top of their previous roles and responsibilities. They may work long hours to compensate for the reduction in income, and no longer protected by their homes, families and communities, they are also more vulnerable to physical and sexual assault and rape.²³ Internally displaced women may also have a harder time to replace documentation or claim property rights in places where these are usually only issued in the male head of family's name or inheritance rights are inequitable.²⁴

Where internally displaced men stay with their families, domestic violence, including spousal abuse and marital rape, can increase as a result of tensions, uncertainty about the future and the breakdown of traditional norms.²⁵ Male heads of displaced households do not always share aid with their families, leaving women economically dependent because they have the primary responsibility for raising children and domestic chores, which gives them less time to seek paid work.²⁶ This leaves internally displaced women at risk of sexual exploitation to meet their basic assistance and protection needs.

In Timor Leste, the frustration of male IDPs over the loss of roles and resources, dislocation and uncertainty made worse by alcohol abuse led to sexual assault and rape, pregnancy, disruption of education and internally displaced women resorting to sex work.²⁷

SDG 14

Internally displaced fishing communities may lose access to their fisheries and essential assets such as boats and nets, which prevents them from pursuing their livelihoods. Armed conflict and disasters can also reduce water quality and harm plant and animal life in oceans and river basins, affecting those who depend on such resources for their food security or income. People in coastal areas particularly may also be displaced to make way for tourism development, and the construction, pollution, and other human interference in ecosystems associated with such projects have detrimental effects on water quality and wildlife.



In post-war and post-tsunami Sri Lanka, land has been acquired for infrastructure and tourism development, displacing people or preventing IDPs' return. It has also been allocated and redistributed among communities affected by the conflict, which has increased tensions over fishing rights and resources, and puts fragile relations between returned IDPs and migrant fishing communities at risk of collapse.²⁸

Displacement as a threat to the 2030 agenda

The 2030 agenda represents an opportunity to address IDPs' needs and prevent future displacement. At the same time, however, there is a risk that development investments to achieve the SDGs will cause displacement, which in turn will set back countries' political, economic, social and environmental gains. Internal displacement could conceivably undermine the overall achievement of the agenda. A closer look at two projects that support targets for SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure demonstrates this downside of development.



INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER TRANS-SHIPMENT TERMINAL, KOCHI, INDIA



A husband and wife in their house on the outskirts of Kochi Kerala where they have resettled following displacement to make way for the international container trans-shipment terminal (ICTT). They feel isolated and the lack of affordable transport options has distanced them from their family and friends. Photo: IDMC, March 2016

Kochi, a major coastal city in India's southern state of Kerala, has been undergoing a period of major transformation with state and foreign investment to boost economic growth in the area. The first phase of an international container trans-shipment terminal (ICTT), the first such hub in India, was completed in 2011 with majority participation by Dubai Ports World. This large-scale urban infrastructure project has been the biggest driver of displacement in Kochi in the last decade with ninety hectares of land required for the project.²⁹

The terminal did not in itself displace people, but the road and rail infrastructure to connect it with Kochi affected 326 families, through the loss of their homes, part of their land or property, or their livelihood options. The resettlement and rehabilitation package proposed initially undervalued their losses, but it was improved after the physically forced eviction of 10 families and subsequent peaceful protests. The eventual offer included the equivalent of 80,000 rupees for a cent of land, or around \$1,200 per 40 square metres, but not all of those displaced received it, and those who did were nevertheless left impoverished.³⁰

According to the displaced themselves, the land offered as part of the rehabilitation package was not of equivalent value or quality to that they previously owned. Some plots had no services and were on marshland on the outskirts of town, more than 15 kilometres from their previous residences. They were also next to a waste management facility, which led to respiratory problems. As a result, most of the beneficiaries left their plots vacant, despite the offer of tenure security and resale rights after ten years.

The ICTT project has simultaneously contributed to and undermined India's development goals. It has helped to boost economic growth and employment, but through displacement it has also led to setbacks in other areas

For those who did take up their plots, long and expensive commutes and the common practice of not leaving women at home without a male family member for security reasons have prevented them

from maintaining jobs and family and other connections.³¹

Much of the land acquired for the ICTT was wetland, and the rich ecosystems of Kochi's estuaries were polluted during the construction of the road and rail infrastructure.³² Many displaced families depended on the area's rich natural resources for their livelihoods, alternating between rice cultivation, prawn farming and fishing.

Their loss of access to these areas and environmental degradation means that many have lost their livelihoods without compensation or support.³³ Some of those displaced had to change their occupation, while others had to commute to do the same job. The revised rehabilitation plan envisaged each family being offered a job at ICTT, but this has not happened.

The ICTT project has simultaneously contributed to and undermined India's development goals. It has helped to boost economic growth and employment, but through displacement it has also led to setbacks in other areas, including increased poverty, worse health, reduced access to work and livelihoods and polluted marine ecosystems.

THILAWA SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE, YANGON, MYANMAR



A displaced family, finding themselves in debt, sold their house and built a small one near a relocation site in Thilawa, Myanmar. Photo: Earthrights International, July 2017

The Thilawa special economic zone (SEZ) near Thilawa port, around 25 kilometres south of Yangon, is the first such area the Myanmar government has established and the first phase has been in operation since 2015.³⁴ It is a delineated geographical area with a special legal regime for business activity with tax and export privileges. It is being developed primarily in cooperation with the Japanese government and corporations, and will mainly house textile, food and beverage and spare parts factories and other manufacturing industries.³⁵ As well as the construction of the factories themselves, the SEZ also requires major water, gas, electricity, transport and telecommunications infrastructure.

Phase one required more than 400 hectares of land and displaced 68 households, and phase two will require 2000 hectares of land and displace another 846 households (3,869 people).³⁶ The government relocated 68 households in late 2013 to a more remote area eight kilometres away from their original homes, where living conditions were worse. The quality of housing is inadequate as is drainage, rendering homes prone to flooding even in the dry season.³⁷ Thilawa is exposed to tropical cyclones and floods, and was on the path of cyclone Nargis,

a devastating 2008 storm.³⁸ Regardless, no disaster risk assessment was included in the environmental impact assessment for the project, either for the relocation area or the SEZ itself.³⁹

The Thilawa SEZ may help to boost economic growth and employment in Myanmar, but it has simultaneously caused displacement and so contributed to impoverishment, poor health, fewer education opportunities and deepening inequality

Monetary compensation to those displaced was paid for crops, animals, trees and houses, but not land, and it was insufficient for those displaced to maintain their livelihoods.⁴⁰ Farmers who lost their land were not provided with alternative plots, and people forced to quit their jobs because of prohibitively expensive commutes received no livelihood compensation.⁴¹ Around a dozen people benefited from vocational training and a small number found new employment, but the jobs promised in the SEZ have not materialised.⁴²

One survey shows that average household incomes dropped by 78 per cent following displacement, and that the vast majority of families have gone into debt to meet their needs.⁴³ Twenty-eight per cent of households reported increased hunger and 14 per cent reported high child malnutrition, and that they struggled more to access healthcare because of their isolated location and lack of finances.⁴⁴ IDPs' physical and mental health has also deteriorated, with some exhibiting symptoms of depression and anxiety.⁴⁵ Their poor health has been made worse by inadequate sanitation in the resettlement areas, where the water is contaminated with bacteria.⁴⁶ Some displaced children also missed a year of school.⁴⁷ Of the 68 displaced households, 31 left the relocation site within the first nine months of their displacement.⁴⁸

As with the ICTT in Kochi, the Thilawa SEZ may help to boost economic growth and employment in Myanmar, but it has simultaneously caused displacement and so contributed to impoverishment, poor health, fewer education opportunities and deepening inequality. The Myanmar government and other investors have an opportunity to avoid these development setbacks in the next phase of the project.

Accounting for setbacks

It is not only IDPs who suffer the adverse effects of displacement. So does society, the economy and environment. As shown by the examples above, displacement for infrastructure projects can destabilise the society if those affected are not adequately consulted. It can harm the economy if they are not adequately compensated or provided with livelihood opportunities, damage health if food security, clean water and sanitation are not ensured, and degrade the environment. These impacts affect development in the short-term, and if left unaddressed can generate longer-term inequality, fragility, vulnerability – and increase the risk of onward displacement.⁴⁹

To present a true picture of progress toward achievement of the SDGs, a more comprehensive view is needed of the progress and setbacks for each goal that includes and goes beyond consideration of the impacts on IDPs themselves. Understanding the broader trade-offs of development investments and activities is vital. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of SDG 9, for example, needs not only to consider infrastructure gains, but also how the costs of internal displacement and adverse environmental impacts can hamper progress under other development goals.

To ensure the 2030 agenda is not undermined, a methodology is needed to identify, measure and expose the progress and setbacks that arise from development projects. As displacement can have multi-dimensional effects on development,

measuring progress should include an integrated analysis of what IDPs and others lose and gain as a result of displacement; how the phenomenon affects society, the economy and environment more broadly; and how the adverse effects drag on a country's achievement of its development goals.

Some of the questions that need to be asked are outlined in table 1, p.8. The situation at the micro level – how IDPs and host communities are affected - and at the macro level – how local, national and regional social and economic dynamics are impacted – needs to be monitored and understood.⁵⁰ A system-wide analysis that includes quantifiable and non-quantifiable impacts may produce a more accurate picture of the development setbacks that displacement causes. It would also highlight the trade-offs inherent in decision-making and allow for a more comprehensive assessment of future risks.

Uncovering the impacts of displacement is not without challenges. It is often difficult to separate the effects of displacement from other impacts of war, violence, disasters and development. There is also usually no ideal 'control' population to compare to the displaced population. Comparison can also be hampered by a lack of data on the economic, social, environmental, security and political situation before displacement occurred.⁵¹ Despite these limitations, the broader impacts of displacement can and should be estimated as a first step to understanding and assessing the relationship between displacement and development.



Many slum dwellers in Monrovia, Liberia are IDPs who remain vulnerable as private and public development projects evict them and demolish their homes. Photo: NRC/L. Cunial, January 2010

TABLE 1:
STARTING QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE THE LINK BETWEEN DISPLACEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Domain	Research questions	Areas for multi-level analysis
Economy	How does displacement affect livelihoods and local economies, and how do the changes affect displacement risk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to land with tenure security ■ Changes in access to and value of property ■ Relevant skill sets ■ Price of basic goods ■ Income inequality ■ Unemployment and access to markets
Society	How does displacement affect social inequality, and how do the changes affect displacement risk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discrimination ■ Access to services and social protection ■ Access to opportunities ■ Social networks ■ Ability to practice customs and beliefs ■ Inter-group grievances ■ Health ■ Education attainment
Environment	How does displacement affect the quality and use of land and water, and how do the changes affect displacement risk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural hazard exposure ■ Food security and nutrition ■ Vegetation ■ Quality and availability of water, prevalence of infectious diseases
Security	How does displacement affect people's physical security, and how do the changes affect displacement risk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social unrest ■ Domestic and gender-based violence ■ Levels of violence and conflict ■ Levels of crime and illicit trade, flows of arms and finance ■ Forced recruitment ■ Informal settlement proliferation ■ Rule of law, accountability and judicial constraints on executive power ■ Policies on disaster risk reduction and the protection of IDPs ■ Protection of human rights
Governance	How does displacement affect administrative and political structures and processes, and how do the changes affect displacement risk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Changes in national social spending per capita ■ Local government public investment per capita ■ Changes in building standards, land use and zoning regulations ■ Public participation ■ Regime persistence, instability ■ Transparency of political institutions ■ Corruption perceptions ■ Proportion of country affected by crisis

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