

New informal mechanism to monitor government follow-up on UN IDP missions



by Jens-Hagen Eschenbächer

Through a series of reports published with national civil society organisations, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has established an informal mechanism to monitor progress in implementing recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General's Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs.

Following each country visit, the UN Representative, Walter Kälin (like his predecessor, Francis Deng) issues a publicly available mission report¹ which includes a comprehensive list of recommendations. These recommendations – primarily directed at national governments – outline what improvements should be made to ensure respect for the rights of IDPs and adequate responses to their protection and assistance needs. They are a valuable tool both for governments to guide their efforts towards better protection of IDPs and for international organisations and national civil society groups advocating for improved responses in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.²

Progress in implementation has often been slow or – when there is lack of political will from national authorities – not immediately apparent. Walter Kälin's office only has limited resources to follow up post-mission progress with the governments of all countries visited. The recommendations' potential for advocacy is not always recognised by non-governmental or international actors.³

Recognising the important role of civil society in addressing IDP situations, IDMC has begun to collaborate with national civil society organisations to monitor and push for effective implementation of post-mission recommendations. In 2006 the first three of a series of monitoring reports were published and launched at public meetings convened by

IDMC and civil society groups from Uganda, Turkey and the Russian Federation. The reports – available on the IDMC website⁴ – are mainly based on research done by the national partner organisations: the Ugandan Refugee Law Project,⁵ the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV)⁶ and the Russian human rights network, Memorial.⁷ They analyse the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented and highlight remaining gaps and outstanding issues to be addressed. Walter Kälin supports the initiative and has contributed a foreword to each of the reports.

Taking stock after the publication of the first three reports, IDMC believes the reports have proven successful in several ways. They have:

- raised awareness of the recommendations and their continued relevance for addressing local IDP situations, thus directly supporting the mandate of the UN Representative and contributing to enhancing the impact of his work
- provided a unique in-depth analysis of the most pertinent issues related to each of the internal displacement crises covered. Up-to-date information and suggestions on how to address outstanding issues have helped build capacity of local actors.
- served to support the increased involvement of NGOs and research institutes in IDP-related monitoring and advocacy.

Partnerships have created important synergies by combining IDMC's international outreach and leverage with the local expertise and access provided by national civil society organisations.

- provided guidance for governments in their efforts to implement the recommendations: some have explicitly recognised their value.
- provided the UN Representative, international organisations, local NGOs and donors with a powerful advocacy tool. The findings of the Uganda report have fed into discussions at the UN Security Council on northern Uganda and been used as a background document for an NRC-sponsored hearing on the conflict in northern Uganda at the European Parliament in Brussels in October 2006.

Based on the positive experience with the first three monitoring reports, IDMC will continue to initiate similar studies in other countries to be visited by the Secretary-General's Representative. It is hoped that this will further contribute to promoting the recommendations as a useful advocacy tool and fostering improved government responses to IDP situations.

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1. www.ohchr.org/english/issues/idp/visits.htm
 2. www.ohchr.org/english/issues/idp/standards.htm
 3. An important exception is the Colombian section of the International Commission of Jurists which makes extensive use of the recommendations in their advocacy work. www.icj.org/world_pays.php?id_mot=20&lang=en
 4. www.internal-displacement.org/publications
 5. www.refugeelawproject.org
 6. www.tesev.org.tr/eng
 7. www.memo.ru/eng