

Internal displacement and peace mediation

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The need to protect the rights of persons displaced by conflict and find durable solutions to their displacement is inextricably linked to achieving a viable, sustainable peace.

No realistic plan for peace and reconciliation should ignore the rights and interests of IDPs. Failure to consult with IDPs, address their needs or find solutions to their displacement through a peace process and agreement can stir tensions, affect post-conflict politics and challenge ongoing peace-building efforts.

To assist mediators and their teams better understand the rights, needs and interests of IDPs and to provide them with practical guidance on how best to devise processes that address these interests in a meaningful fashion, the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement has developed a new resource, *Integrating Internal Displacement in Peace Processes and Peace Agreements: A Guide for Mediators*. This *Guide* sets out four steps for mediators to consider at the outset of a peace process. Each step discusses the key issues related to situations of displacement that may arise while planning and conducting a mediator-led peace process. The four steps are:

Step 1: Assess the causes, dynamics and characteristics of internal displacement. Mediators should invest the time and resources necessary to understand the nature and patterns of internal displacement, along with the characteristics of specific IDP groups and any leadership structures that may exist. Links that IDPs may have to parties to the conflict should also be identified. This understanding will help mediators to avoid the pitfall of thinking of IDPs as one homogenous bloc, and to ascertain how IDPs may affect the peace process either positively or negatively.

Step 2: Create a framework for integrating internal displacement. Once mediators have assessed the displacement situation, they need to

develop a framework for integrating internal displacement into the peace process. This framework should comprise two elements: 1) a core mission statement that identifies the needs of IDPs, and 2) the legal and policy foundations for the participation of IDPs in the peace process. These foundations can be drawn from the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, international humanitarian and human rights law, and national legislation and policy. Grounding IDP interests and rights within this framework, and linking them to the Guiding Principles in particular, can help all those involved in a peace process to view the situation of displacement through an objective lens and shield it from political manipulation.

Step 3: Engage IDPs in the peace process. Mediators should decide how to consult IDPs and how these consultations relate to the overall mediator-led peace process. IDP consultations can take place as a stand-alone process or they can be linked to the mediation process itself. In deciding upon a specific consultative process, mediators will need to ascertain the views of the parties to the peace process on consultations with the IDPs in addition to the willingness and capacity of the IDP community to participate in the process. Mediators should ensure they consult with IDPs who are credible representatives of the community, including women's associations.

Step 4: Integrate the rights and interests of IDPs in the peace agreement. In doing this, mediators

may elect to include substantive provisions in the main text of the agreement or in an associated protocol. Either approach can work depending on the specific context. However, mediators should ensure inclusion of the following elements: 1) clear definitions pertaining to internal displacement, 2) stipulation to respect displacement-specific human rights and protection under international humanitarian law, 3) incorporation of IDP interests in a manner acceptable to the parties, 4) obligations of the parties vis-à-vis internal displacement, and 5) a clear implementation process that involves roles for IDPs.

The *Guide for Mediators* is being published by the United States Institute for Peace as part of its Peacemaker's Toolkit Series¹ and will then be disseminated to mediators and others involved in resolving conflicts that have triggered internal displacement. A CD-ROM resource kit with reference materials, case studies and texts of peace agreements and international instruments such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement will accompany the *Guide*.

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The Project's earlier publication Addressing Internal Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements and Peace-Building is online at <http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/09/peaceprocesses.aspx>

1. <http://www.usip.org/resources/core-conflict-management-resources>



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