

Opening remarks

by Oddhild Günther

*Dear participants and Dr Deng,
The Norwegian Refugee Council had the
pleasure of being invited by NTNU to
co-organise this seminar, a task we accepted
with great satisfaction.*

For many years NRC has made efforts to raise awareness of internal displacement and the destiny of the millions whose lives have been affected by unrest. To see all of you gathered here – dedicated to doing research on IDP-related issues and to investigate possible ways of cooperation – is therefore a milestone and a great event for NRC.

NRC has made an effort to collect information on IDP populations around the world through our Global IDP database in Geneva. This enterprise has been costly and sometimes more than we thought we could manage. However, we have overcome the challenges and today the database is a well-known and useful tool for documenting the magnitude and the scope of the IDP problem.

The high number of internet visits to the IDP database underlines its value and the need for such information. A database has, however, its limita-

tions, being so to speak merely the first step of collecting data and knowledge of IDPs. The next steps involve the engagement of academia, universities and research institutes. You have the privilege of time for concentration, for diving deeper, being more specific and detailed. While the database struggles to be up-to-date, bringing rapid changes in displacement patterns to your attention, researchers have the opportunity to develop a long-term perspective, to observe the impact of displacement even after several decades.

NRC is not only running a database. Our staff are humanitarian fieldworkers in 14 different countries. NGO fieldworkers are among those who stand to benefit most from IDP-related research. Our ability to work with IDPs, to understand their situation more holistically, to empower instead of creating dependency – doing no harm – will be an important result from your studies.

Examples can be drawn from NTNU's research in Angola and Sri Lanka and the deeper understanding of displacement and its many facets it has brought about.

NGOs therefore warmly welcome the growing interest which is manifested by the large group of researchers present here today. NRC hopes and trusts that networking will be fruitful for us as well as for researchers in



their everyday struggle for progress and results.

An example of a fruitful cooperation has been the close cooperation between the Global IDP database and Dr Deng's office and the Brookings-SAIS Project in Washington. Our common effort to disseminate information on the Guiding Principles in countries where inhabitants are suffering displacement has worked very well. We have provided arenas in which government officials, the police, the military and, last but not least, IDPs themselves have come together, acquired new knowledge, discussed, opened new initiatives and brought results. This positive experience of cooperation could inspire all of us.

I am convinced that you will all provide valuable input to the research network created here and I am grateful for NTNU's initiative and their dedication to the cause of IDPs. Let us listen, learn, discuss, enjoy wintry Trondheim, leave our mobiles and computers behind and just be here – for these two days.

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Kristin Storholt, representative of the Research Council of Norway which sponsored the conference.